

Window on Jordan

Mobiles ring at all hours of the day!

By Ibtisam Awadat

A FUNNY thing happened in a restaurant the other day. As 10 businessmen gathered for a luncheon appointment, I noticed that every 10 minutes a phone would ring and a member of the group would excuse himself to answer it. After this happened a few times, I could see that the tension in the group was increasing. It was only after the meal that the reason became self-evident.

"I'll tell you the truth," confessed Samir Maher, one of the businessman with a mobile. "That was the deal of my life, and I was trying my hardest to give the impression that I am always busy." To do this, Samir would get one of his employees to telephone him every 10 minutes.

"I do this whenever I am about to sign a contract with new partners—appearances in my line of work, even if they are false, are very important," added Samir, who says the mobile-phone is an indispensable tool for today's businessmen.

The mobile has other benefits as well.

"I bought this mobile especially for my family, because my wife is visiting her mother abroad, and I have to work all day," Ma'moun Yasser, a school teacher and an accountant in the evening, told *The Star*. "The children are safe with my parents, but in case of an emergency, I can reach the house within a few minutes," he continued.

The advantages of this invention are remarkable.

But there are disadvantages—like the increase in road accidents caused by drivers using their mobiles and not paying attention to the traffic. Not to mention the constant disruption in restaurants, cinemas and other public places.

Another worrying trend is street peddlers selling smuggled goods. They use their mobiles to facilitate the selling process, and to warn the other peddlers of

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The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

Le Jourdain
Supplément en français du Star

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اسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

Despite outcry, officials reassure public about safety of drinking water

By Ibtisam Awadat
Star Staff Writer

WATER, WATER, everywhere, and not a drop to drink, so goes the favorite saying. It is again the time of year when the problem of water scarcity becomes of public concern.

It is no secret that Jordan has limited water resources, and it becomes scarcer during these hot Summer months.

Figures do not lie. A Jordanian household receives only 22 gallons a day, compared to 65 and 78 gallons per day in Saudi Arabia and Israel respectively.

Jordan consumed 875 cubic meters last year—235 million cubic meters of which went on drinking. A Jordanian household receives on average 165 cubic meters annually, of which 142 cubic meters are devoted to drinking purposes.

And this may explain why the Jordan Water Authority follows a stringent regime in the Summer months.

The water taps to every region in the Kingdom is now switched on twice a week (incidentally, in Winter it's distributed every day).

Indeed, Jordanians have almost come to live with this scarcity. However this week things have taken a new twist on the water front.

Residents across the board have been complaining of new ailments related to drinking water. For one thing they have reported a change in the taste and color of the drinking water, inciting fears about how clean the water is.

But officials are trying to be reassuring. Munther Khlifat, secretary general of the Water Authority, said that "the change in the water is attributed to the high temperatures, which provides a suitable environment for Bryophyta (a moss) to grow in our reservoirs." Khlifat pointed out that this problem is an international one, and that no new solutions are available.

Director of the Laboratories Department at the Greater Amman Municipality Dr Mansour Dalahmeh have been conducting tests specifically to allay public fears. "The situation is now under control he told *The Star*.

"We took samples from different sites in Amman, and found no chemical or bacterial traces in the water. The change in taste is attributed to an unidentified organic substance. The samples we examined today are a lot better than yesterday. However, I recommend that people clean their water tanks as this will improve the quality of their water."

Sources at the Ministry of Water stressed that an intensive program is under way to check on all the sites alongside the Yarmouk River, as well as our supplies from Tiberias (via the King Abdallah Canal) to the Zai Desalination Station.

The water problem today is being addressed by some members of Parliament as well. Deputy Khalil Atteyah expressed his concern to the Prime Minister, asking for immediate steps to be taken to contain the problem. He told *The Star* that, "I met with the Minister of Water, who emphasized that procedures had been taken to clean the water." Atteyah said that he will speak to the Prime Minister to make sure that the issue remains in the forefront.

To reassure the public further, Dr Saleh Al Shar'a, director of the Protection of the Environment Corp asked the Environment Center at the Royal Scientific Society to examine the quality of water. Officials at the Corporation are still waiting the results of the water checks.

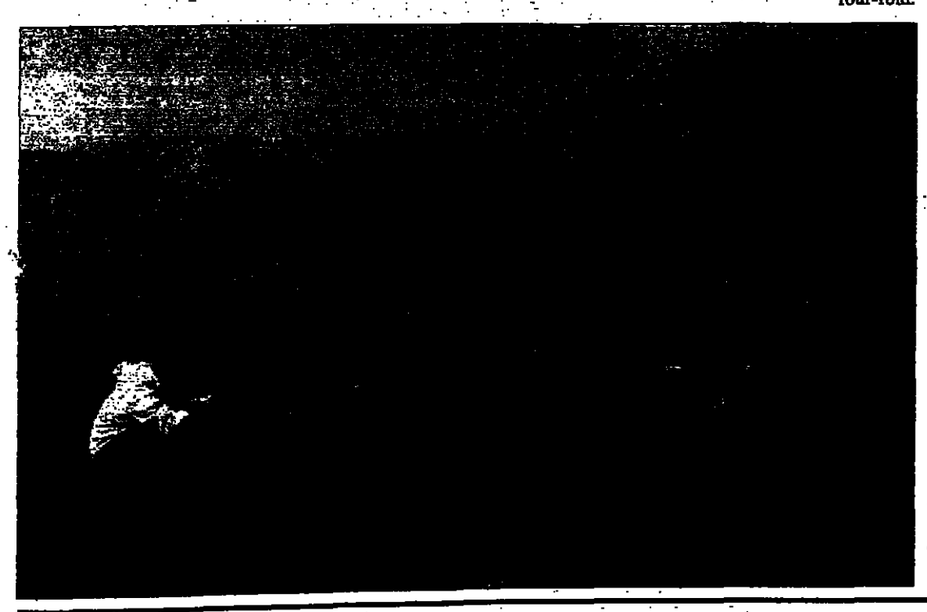
However, some experts in the private sector still doubt the official view. They say that if the increase in temperatures means that our water is infiltrated by moss, then all countries with high temperatures must have undrinkable water.

A well informed source noted that another contamination had been identified—that of chlorine—and blames the Water Authority. "The contamination happened during the sampling process, aimed at tackling the moss problem. The administration at the Desalination Station are the only ones to be blamed."

The expert warned of the effect of chlorine, used to purify water, on humans, after rumours spread saying that chlorine levels increased by four-fold.

Drinking water with a high content of chlorine can cause indigestion and diarrhea. There have been reports recently of an increase in complaints of diarrhea from both public and private clinics.

Water officials maintain their stance that this matter is due to the increase in temperatures, and say that it is normal for this time of year.■



A water canal in that has been polluted



Chinese models perform for the Vidal Sassoon hair show in Beijing July 14. The show, which presented the latest hair styles from the Vidal Sassoon Salons and Schools, was part of a promotion for their haircare product in China.

Reuters photo

Growth rate estimates cause heated dialogue

By Ilham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer

THE CURRENT controversy regarding the contradictory growth rate figures released for the Jordanian economy is now taking a political dimension resulting in a heated debate in the Lower House which will discuss this problem today, Thursday. It is clear that some politicians and economists see the latest revised figures as confirming their pessimistic view on recent government policy. It would seem that their repeated warnings were justified, highlighting the problems resulting from the economic reform program, launched in 1989.

Some critics are outraged and are calling for the government's economic team to resign. One deputy, Seif Al Din Murad, has publically called for the resignation of the whole government for what he claimed has manipulated the budgets, and mislead the Lower House and the Jordanian people.

On the other side the government held an extrordinary session to discuss the current economic situation in which Jawad Al Anani, deputy prime minister, briefed the cabinet on his last visit to the state and his discussion in the World Bank/IMF. The government's economic team are meeting today, Thursday with the Lower House Financial and Economic Committee.

On the growth figures, some pro-government experts stress that "it is only a small error; and that the problem is not endemic." They concede that there is something wrong in the methodology used in collecting, analyzing and releasing data related to the economic progress of the Kingdom. However, the debate is escalating and there are differing points of view.

"The fact is that we lacked a well-planned, long-term strategy, and without a strategy based on real scientific study it becomes very hard to develop the country," Mr Mohammad Al Dabbas, former Minister of Finance, told *The Star*. He added that since the 1960's, Jordan's development plans have not been very effective. "Jordan should profit from our strategic resources, such as potash, which can contribute as much as $900 million in income. At the moment this resource is not being fully exploited," Mr Al Dabbas clarified. "It's true Jordan has maintained the value of the dinar and built a satisfactory foreign reserve estimated at $1.7 billion, but our economy is still ailing. Prices of consumer goods are beginning to rocket, living conditions have not improved, our debt problems are still with us, and the level of exports are falling," he added.



Seif Al Din Murad, not a lone voice against the figures

Earlier this week, Deputy Mansour Seif Eddin Murad lashed out at the government's economic team for what he called as hiding facts from the people, and warned of the consequences. Murad also sent a hard-hitting memo to the government following the discovery of the new growth figures for the Jordanian economy. He said that the figures expose the Kingdom's economic and political credibility, adding that the contradiction in the growth figures would effect negatively on the country's development schemes.

Defending the government, Dr Abderrazaq Bani Hani (Director of the Studies and Research Department at the Ministry of Planning) told *The Star* that, "We produced the right figures; not the World Bank. It all derives from a technical mistake." Explaining how the figures got mixed up, he added, "The technical committee, which is in charge of producing the figures, meets twice a year. In April, it builds its estimates on primary data and estimates the growth ratio in the gross domestic product. In October or November, the committee meets again to finalize these estimates, after consulting a detailed survey by the General Statistics Dept."

He continued that "the committee comprises members from the Ministries of Planning, Industry and Trade, Finance and Agriculture, in addition to the Central Bank of Jordan and the General Statistics Dept. A mistake was made in the 1996 growth figures. Our expectations were greater than what was actually achieved; we expected 5.2 percent, when in fact it was only 0.8 percent."

He pointed out that the figures for 1997 were also lower than estimated, from 5.3 percent to 2.7 percent. Upon discovering the fault in the figures, the committee, he continued, "sent for the World Bank team to consult and assist in identifying the error. It could be in the methodology—the way of checking the figures or auditing them. We will try to conduct these estimates in future on a quarterly basis to guarantee more credibility and accuracy," Bani Hani added.

Adopting an identical opinion is Dr Yousef Mansour, head of the technical committee in the Ministry of Planning. He says "...What happened in the case of our released growth figures is a common mistake; one that can reoccur as long as they are considered expectations and estimates." In his view, some politicians have used the issue as an excuse to criticize the achievements of the reform program.■

A message from Alfa Ramases

World Report

By Arnie Wilson

ON HEARING exciting but unconfirmed rumours that scientists at the Arecibo Observatory, in the remote hinterland of Puerto Rico, had picked up a series of unexplained sounds from deep space, I rang my contact there to find out what all the fuss was about.

The Arecibo base monitors potential signals from intelligent extraterrestrial sources, and if anyone out there is trying to get in touch, this is where the call will land.

But Orville Leukowitz, who used to feed me information from Houston control centre during the Apollo moon missions when I was a TV researcher in the 1970s, wasn't too forthcoming. From reports I had read, I imagined scenes reminiscent of the film Contact, based on Professor Carl Sagan's novel, in which a complex burst of sonic activity was picked up by an array of 27 linked radio telescope dishes in Soccoro, New Mexico, sending Jodie Foster into a frenzy of excitement.

"Nothing so dramatic," said Leukowitz. "But something strange is going on. A signal was selected and we fed some random sounds into our computers. To be honest, there are signs that we may have picked up a mathematically coded message.

"The problem is, computers these days have such a degree of artificial intelligence that we think they might even be capable of the human weakness of wishful thinking".

"So what's the message, Orville" I asked. He ignored my question.

"This thing is by no means done and dusted," he said "We still need to run a lot more tests. But we have what seems to be a chain of Anglo-Saxon words which do not appear to be randomly produced.

It appears to us to have no meaning, but the rudimentary sentences do contain a subject, noun and verb. And it does sort of make sense. But then again it doesn't, if you see what I mean"

I didn't, but I let Leukowitz continue.

"The message—if indeed that's what it is—appears to be coming from a source roughly 94bn miles from earth. There are no known planets in that vicinity, but there is a star called Alfa Ramases, which could support a planet. The radio waves we have received would have left their source approximately 16 years ago."

"But Orville, what was the message," I asked frantically.

"I simply cannot tell you," he said, his voice dropping. "It's classified. My job...but I suppose I can tell you the jingle—if that's what it is—which precedes it"

"What d'you mean, jingle?"

"Well, it sounds like a sort of tribal war dance in Morse code. It's much too regular to be random. It goes sort of 'blam blam blam blam blam, blam blam blam BLAM blam blam!' The groupings of three blams and the last two blams are staccato. It's like: 'dash, dash dot dot dash dot dot dot DASH dot dot.'"

It made no sense to me, but it kept playing on my mind, so last week I called Leukowitz again, at home this time, and attempted to prise the rest of the message out of him. This time he was a little more compliant.

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Honor crimes

Need for greater awareness

By Ghassan Joha
Star Staff Writer

PEOPLE OFTEN say that the family is the primary social unit, binding its members together in a friendly and informal atmosphere. Sometimes, however, this level of friendliness can border on an invasion of privacy, and when your every move is observed it can lead to tension and resentment among the family, ending regrettably in domestic crime. In addition, relationships between family relatives can often be artificial—with little genuine feeling between them—and they are only held together by a sense of duty and honor to the family unit.

In the Arab world today, many young women are being tortured or killed each year in what is called "crimes of honor"—when men kill their female relatives for bringing what is regarded as shame to the family by their 'immoral behavior'. Merely speaking to men, or being seen with them, is sometimes classed as 'immoral behavior.'

In the 1990s, honor crimes increased rapidly in Jordan, where on average 20 women are killed every year. Officials confirmed that 25 women were murdered in Jordan as a result of honor killings in 1997; most of these cases were based merely on suspicion. By June this year, 12 murders were registered and this figure is expected to rise further by the end of the year. Experts say it is the lack of education and appropriate penal laws that are to blame for this reoccurring problem.

"These crimes show the extent of male chauvinism against women in our society, which disregards their rights and abilities in the community," Asma Khader, a prominent lawyer and civil rights activist, told *The Star*. She added that the current laws must be modernized and the Judicial system must impose harsher penalties against offenders if any progress is to made.

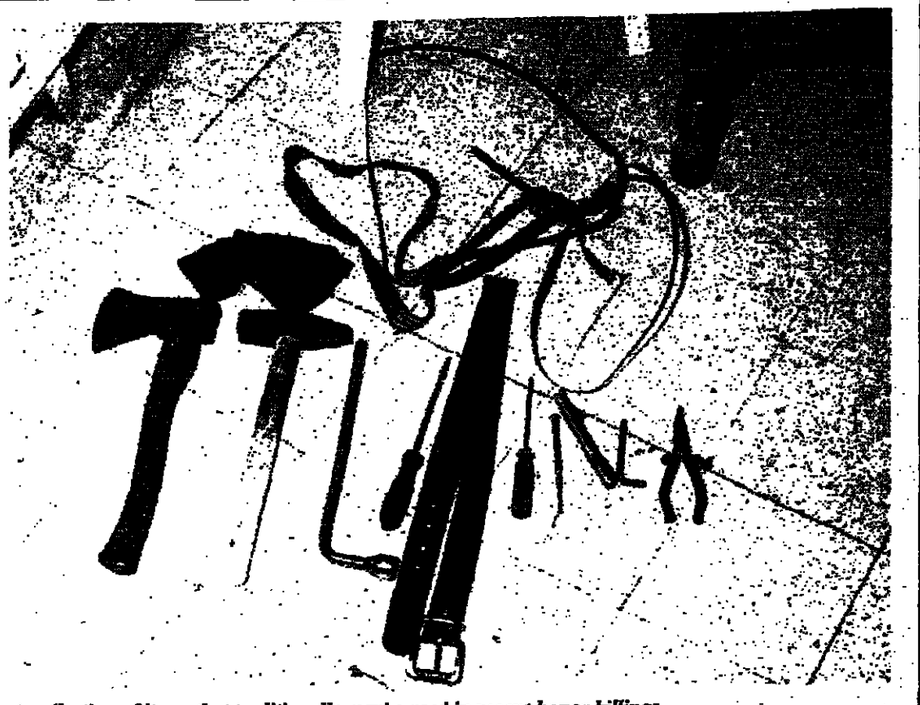
Professor Mousa Shteiwi, a sociologist at the University of Jordan, says that honor crimes are attributed to the major changes faced by today's Arab pastoral communities, who more often than not, resist change and prefer to conform to the prevailing values in society. "The majority of men perceive the participation of women in public life as a threat to their power. This is part of the changing roles of male domination," he told *The Star*.

One such horror story regarding the so-called cleansing of honor, happened in May 1994, when a 16 year-old girl was murdered by her older brother because she was raped by her younger brother. He was encouraged by relatives to cleanse the family honor, fearing ridicule from the neighbors if they discovered their unmarried sister was pregnant. Mrs Khader provided another example earlier this year, when a father killed his 15 year-old daughter just because he suspected her of speaking to a man—who was one kilometer away from her—when she was out tying up the horse. Mrs Khader pleaded with every parent to have more consideration when dealing with these cases, and that all the evidence should be reviewed before any action is taken.

"In general, our society doesn't mind women getting an education and going out to work, because they are under the control and protection of the tribe or family," adds Dr Shteiwi, who disagrees with the definition of honor crimes. "They are [honor crimes] the outcome of social contradictions within our society, and will never be stamped out unless we all cooperate and face them with determination."

But what kind of effort is Dr Shteiwi talking about? "There are many social and legal actions that should be undertaken immediately," he added. "I call on all NGOs, the Jordanian Women Association and the cultural institutions to provide greater education on honor crimes; they should contact society directly in order to acquaint people with the equal rights of women."

"Who can say women have full rights in Jordan, noone," Mrs Khader points out." The most basic right a woman should have is to be able to leave the country without taking permission from her guardian. This right doesn't exist."



A collection of items that traditionally maybe used in recent honor killings

As for legal efforts, a new penal code is currently being discussed and is due to be implemented by the Ministry of Justice. Justice Minister Riyadh Al Shak'a said earlier this year that the ministry is looking into the possibility of either increasing the jail terms, or introducing new laws to combat the current loop-hole which allows sentences to be reduced in certain circumstances.

The new draft comes after HM King Hussein made a passionate plea last November for Jordanians to end violence against women, and called for an end to the suffering of women and children. HRH Crown Prince Hassan also called on law enforcement officials to apply the law more rigorously against domestic abusers. The mass media also gave the issue wide coverage, despite the fact that some members of society criticised them for tarnishing the image of the country. One journalist, Rana Husseini, received an international award after her hard-hitting reports on honor crimes.

In a move to save their lives, several women have been incarcerated at rehabilitation centres, under protective custody away from their male relatives. These inmates—the victims of family disputes and strict social traditions—are spread out among the seven rehabilitation centers across the Kingdom. "This issue alone should serve as a warning to society, in that women are unable to fulfill their true rights," Mrs Khader said.

Islamic law has a say on how to deal with people who commit honor crimes. "Defending your honor is a duty of every Muslim. For instance, if a father kills his daughter's offender then he should not be brought to justice, so long as he can provide sufficient evidence. Sheikh Hijawi, Amman's mufti, told *The Star*. "Honor is one of the most important rights and Islam urges its followers to preserve and care of it." Sheikh Hijawi said that if someone does kill on the basis of honor and he does not have sufficient evidence, then he must face justice. ■

Mobiles ring at all hours

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imminent police raids.

"I use it to send warning singles to my friends when I am selling," said Rami, a young peddler from Amman. "I am responsible for certain areas, and must keep on the look out for the police. I only have to dial one number, say a code word for my friends to pass the message on."

Showing off, Rami continued, "if it is the police then the code word is 'blue', and if they are from the Greater Amman Municipality then the code word is 'orange.' If I don't know where they are from, then I say 'cloudy'." In this way, peddlers have the time to hide their smuggled goods or even pack up completely and disappear.

The number of operating lines devoted to cellular phones are kept confidential, due to competition from the Jordanian Telecommunication Company, but numbers are definitely on the increase. Many users nowadays are ordinary people, and they often cannot afford to pay the bill at the end of the month.

"Having a cellular phone has become a status symbol," said Dr Majdi Al Deen Khamash, head of the Sociology Department at the University of Jordan. "People everywhere have mobiles."

"The trend to own what is essentially a western product will soon disappear as people become accustomed to it," Dr Khamash said.

"But by then some of our cultural and social values like not interrupting others when they are speaking and not leaving the dining table until you have finished your meal, will be lost," he feared.■



■ **Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor left the country, Tuesday, enroute to the United States where the King is undergoing routine medical check ups at the Mayo Clinic. Their Majesties will then go on a state visit to France where they will meet French President Jacque Chirac.**

Euro-Arab parliamentary conference declaration

AMMAN (Petra)—Participants in the 16th Euro-Arab Parliamentary conference, held in Damascus last week, underlined in the final declaration the close relationship between making peace in the Middle East and cementing security and stability in Europe. The declaration added that participants agreed that the Middle East peace process reached a deadlock because of the policies and actions of the Israeli government, adding that saving the peace process is a world responsibility. The participants stressed the necessity of undertaking a firm stance to force Israel to abide by the Madrid terms of reference. The declaration categorically rejected the latest Israeli decision to expand the boundaries of Jerusalem municipality, as it violates the UN Security Council's resolutions. The declaration also called upon concerned states to suspend Israel's participation in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership until it fulfills its obligations as stated in the Barcelona Declaration of November 1995. The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Conference was made up of delegates from 16 Arab parliaments and 14 European parliaments, in addition to observers from the Arab League, the European Commission, the Canadian Senate and the International Red Cross Society. The final declaration of the conference reiterated the call to make the Middle East a region free of all kinds of mass-destruction weapons, urging Germany to stop the deal to sell Israel submarines capable of carrying nuclear warheads. ■

Human Rights Watch criticizes draft press law

(New York)—In a July 10 letter to Jordanian Minister of Higher Education Dr Mohammad Hamdan made public recently, the Human Rights Watch Academic Freedom Committee criticized the draft press and publications law currently being considered by the parliament. The letter, signed on behalf of the committee by Jonathan F. Fanton, President of the New School for Social Research in New York, calls on the Minister to convey the committee's concerns to other government leaders in Jordan.

The letter assails three aspects of the proposed law: firstly, its requirement that all books and other publications be submitted to the Ministry of Information for pre-publication review. Secondly, its requirement that universities, which are nominally exempt from the censorship provisions of the proposed law, obtain "prior permission" from the ministry before ordering foreign books which might violate the law. Thirdly, the law which would forbids independent research and polling institutes from accepting "any financial assistance or support" from foreign sources.

"The law would be a disaster for researchers and scholars in Jordan," said Joseph Saunders, an academic freedom specialist at Human Rights Watch who works with the committee. "It is hostile to the free flow of ideas and hostile to the expression of controversial viewpoints. As such, it is incompatible with the most basic principles of research and scholarship."

The Human Rights Watch Academic Freedom Committee aims to monitor, expose, and mobilize concerted action to challenge threats to academic freedom worldwide, and to foster greater scholarly and media attention to the critical role played by higher education in the development and preservation of civil society.

When teachers, researchers and students are harassed or imprisoned for exercising their rights of free expression and inquiry, when their work or research is censored, when access to educational institutions is restricted on discriminatory grounds, or when universities and schools are closed for political reasons, the committee responds by publicizing the abuses in the media and in the academic community, sending protest letters to appropriate government officials, and uniting concerned organizations in coordinated campaigns for effective international action.

The Human Rights Watch Academic Freedom Committee is composed of 28 university presidents and scholars. Its co-chairs are Jonathan Fanton of the New School for Social Research, Hanna Holborn Gray of the University of Chicago, Vartan Gregorian of the Carnegie Corporation, and Charles Young of the University of California at Los Angeles. ■

A message from Alfa Ramases

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"Look," he said, "I'll tell you. But it must be in the greatest secrecy. Unless someone is playing a gigantic practical joke on us, the message was: 'Earthmen you think it's all over. It is now!' See what I mean? It makes two short sentences. But no sense."

"But that's incredible, Orville!" I said. "Don't you know where those words come from? Something very similar was said by a British football commentator—a chap called Kenneth Wolstenholme—32 years ago when England won the World Cup."

"This cannot be," said Leukowitz. "Are you serious? Is there really a Wolstenholme? This is truly a breakthrough. We checked every source for those words but never thought to try outside the US. This could explain it. It may be no joke. Oh lord, this could be serious."

Almost unable to conceal my excitement, I asked him what he meant.

"Well, there is another sentence in the message which I didn't tell you about," Leukowitz explained. "It had us totally baffled. It just didn't make any sense in the light of what happened to your English football team against Argentina in the World Cup a fortnight ago. But I can see it now. It makes perfect sense."

If there is intelligent life out there in deep space, it would certainly be monitoring television coverage of our football games. And they would have seen the 1966 World Cup finals being played in England.

"It would have taken 16 years for the pictures from Wembley stadium to reach Alfa Ramases. And a further 16 years for us to get their response back. It's incredible."

So what was the final part of the message, Orville? I could hardly contain myself.

"This is unbelievable," he said. "It was: 'Congratulations, England, on winning the World Cup'"■

Financial Times Syndication

The 3rd annual Jordanian-American employment fair will be held at the grounds of the US Embassy on 20 July between 2 pm till 8 pm. Job ConneXion '98 is organized by AMIDEAST Jordan and hosted by the American Cultural Center. This year's fair is sponsored by the Housing Bank, Arthur Anderson, Pepsi Cola International and Primus Computer Networking Services. Jordanian and regional looking for recruitment opportunities in the area.

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LifeScan, a Johnson & Johnson Company, introduces 'ONE TOUCH II' in Jordan

The 'ONE TOUCH II' Meter takes proven ONE TOUCH technology one step further, the meter is smaller, so it fits into your life (and even your pocket), the procedure is simpler, so its easy to use—where ever you are. The results are proven accurate in clinical studies.
No timing. No whipping. No blotting. Accurate results in 45 seconds. Easy to read prompts in English and seven other languages plus symbolic language guide you through the simple three-step procedure. The 'ONE TOUCH II' Meter detects most errors in blood sample size and application. It even notifies you when the meter must be cleaned.
With its extra-ordinary accuracy, and simplicity, the 'ONE TOUCH II' Meter makes it easier for you to manage your diabetes. So you can enjoy an active, fulfilling life. In fac, a recent study in USA and over the world showed the 'ONE TOUCH II' Meter was overwhelmingly accepted by people with diabetes. People just like you.■



For the Record

Energy minister meets Egyptian ambassador

AMMAN (Petra)—Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Mohammad Saleh Hourani met on Monday the Egyptian ambassador in Amman to discuss bilateral cooperation in the field of energy and mineral resources. The two sides discussed arrangements for celebrating the opening of the electric grid between Jordan and Egypt next October (an electric grid due to connect Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, Jordan and Egypt). Mr Hourani and the Egyptian ambassador also reviewed the latest steps regarding future works on the pipeline that transfers Egyptian gas to Aqaba.

Jordan sends relief supplies to Sudan

AMMAN (Petra)—Under directives by His Majesty King Hussein, Jordan despatched on Monday a plane-load of relief supplies to the Sudanese people. The plane carried more than 17 tonnes of supplies including food, medical equipment and drugs. It was seen off by minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Head of the Hashemite Charity Organisation (HCO) Dr. Abdul Salam Abbadi. The HCO has sent similar shipments in the past two months to the Palestinian National Authority, Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran.

Shimon Peres in Amman

AMMAN (Petra)—Israeli Former Prime Minister Shimon Peres stressed the importance of the role played by His Majesty King Hussein to establish peace especially on the Palestinian-Israeli track. In a press meeting a head of delivering a lecture within a program organised by the International Leadership Academy in Amman, he said that the United States should continue to play its vital role in the Middle East. The Israeli Former Premier called for supporting the Palestinians in achieving economic prosperity. He pointed out that the stalemate on the Palestinian-Israeli track had adversely affected Jordanian-Israeli ties. In his lecture entitled 'Leadership and Peaceful Solutions for Conflicts', Mr. Peres said that "peace is an agreement reached among parties to end their differences, and it is vitally important for our future generations." Mr Peres stressed the importance of supporting education and economic development rather than directing funds for purchasing weapons. "Time has come to change the current Israeli government in order to activate the peace process and implement the Israeli commitments towards peace," Peres noted

Jordan-Israel cooperation over agriculture

AMMAN (Petra)—A delegation led by the Secretary General of the Agricultural Ministry visited Israel recently and initialed protocols geared at implementing agricultural cooperation between the two countries. The protocols, due to be signed at the beginning of next month, will include procedures to increase the flow of Jordanian agricultural products to Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas.

Jordan receives US wheat

AMMAN (Petra)—The Ministry of Supply received on Sunday a US wheat shipment. Ministry sources said the approximately 50 thousand tons had arrived at the port of Aqaba, and that it has been tested by specialised agricultural engineers to make sure that it is fit for human consumption. The shipment is part of the Ministry's plan to secure a strategic storage of wheat in the Kingdom, the source said.

Youth Minister meets Arab Ambassadors

AMMAN. (Petra)—Minister of Youth Talal Sara'an Al Hassan met on Sunday with all the Arab ambassadors accredited to Jordan. Al Hassan stressed the importance of the Arab countries' participation in the 9th Pan-Arab Games which will be held in Jordan during August 1999. The minister said that the Jordanian leadership, government and people hope that the games will unite the Arab World, and raise the level of aspirations by Arab youths.

US Ambassador receives Istiqlal medal

AMMAN (Petra)—His Majesty King Hussein conferred upon the US Ambassador to Jordan Wesley Egan the Istiqlal (independence) Medal of the First Order at the end of his tour of duty in Jordan. The medal was delivered to the ambassador by Acting Foreign minister Hani Malki during a lunch banquet held in honour of Mr Egan on Sunday.

JORDAN WEEK



An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar

Marrying in style

■ One of the largest group weddings ever held in Jordan's history is taking place, tomorrow, Friday, 17 July. Organized by the Al Afaf Society, 80 brides and grooms will participate in a collective marriage ceremony. This is the fifth such event to take place in Jordan. Head of the Society, Mufeed Sirhan, said that this number has surpassed all their expectations, and shows that society, and young people in particular, have come to accept this form of marriage ceremony. Couples will come from Amman, Jeresh, Zerqa, Russeifa, Mafraq and Balqa' and all over the kingdom to participate.

Visas denied

■ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is receiving numerous complaints from people, especially students, being denied visas by the Lebanese Embassy in Amman. Some students have even missed their exams simply because they were denied entry into Lebanon. Applicants are saying that they are dismayed with the procedure that they are required to undergo, and that there is discrimination on who gets a visa and who doesn't. Applicants allege that the embassy in Amman carries out major investigations into their backgrounds, place of birth, and information about their mother, father and grandparents.

Electrifying countryside

■ Electricity reached 31 more villages in 1997. The project, carried out by the Jordan Electricity Company cost JD 900,000. Electricity is due to be installed in 17 more villages very soon. This will cost a further JD 600,000. The 'electrifying' process is also going on in Irbid. There, 109 villages are up for electrification. This is costing the Irbid Electricity Company JD 3.6 million. In 1997 electricity was only installed in six villages, but 21 more should benefit from the service this year.

Municipalities

■ Elections to local councils will be held on time. There has been talk that elections could be postponed to a later date, however, the Minister for Municipalities and Rural Affairs, Tawfiq Kreishan, said he saw no reason to postpone them and that they would be held on 15 July 1999. The process of merging local councils is currently being studied and the minister stressed that the two issues are linked.

Gang caught

■ The police caught a gang redhanded in Irbid. The seven-man gang specialized in stealing cars from all around the Kingdom. The gang, one of whose members is of Arab nationality, open under the guise of a car rental office. The gang are particular about the kind of cars they steal: the vehicles must not be more older than five years. The change the car chassis and then sell it. The gang were caught when one a man in Irbid found his car parked out the offices of one of the car rental firms in Irbid.

19,000 visited the Rose-Red City in June

■ More than 19,000 people visited Petra in June, including 3000 Jordanians. The amount of receipts taken by the Petra Antiquities Office totaled JD 330, 000. Dr Mahasdin, the general manager of the Petra Council, said that 220 visitors stayed in Petra for a period of three days last month; 5563 stayed for two days and the number who made a one-day visit increased to 10400.

Controlling crime

■ Crime is on the increase. A report from the national society of Friends of the Jordanian Security Forces highlights this phenomenon. Dr Hamad, president of the society, said that controlling crime is the responsibility of every citizen. He continued that society should develop the spirit of social and voluntary work and that people must take responsibility for themselves. He added that the Society plans to build a big general library where citizens can learn about crime reduction and the relationship between the police and the public. The Society will also publish magazines and strengthen relationships with other societies working in the same field in Jordan and overseas.

Tawjhi results soon

■ The Ministry of Education said that the Tawjhi exam is officially over. Examiners from all over the Kingdom are sitting down and busily marking the exam papers. Official results are set for 24 July.

The Star
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Queen Noor talks with Jordanian soldiers, next to a sign which reads "Danger: Beware of Landmines" in Arabic, during a search for landmines in the Jordan valley, near the border with Israel, 13 July. The Queen announced at the first Landmine Survivor's Network conference in the Middle East, held for two days in Amman, that her country would sign an international treaty to ban the weapons.

AFP photo

Landmine conference in Amman

Jordan's 'killing fields' in the spotlight

By Ibtisam Awadat
Star Staff Writer

"I WAS playing and wandering beside a road, close to my father who was picking olives, when I found a bizarre metallic object," said Ibrahim Wardat, a 12 year-old who paid a very high price for his curiosity. "I pulled out the nail and it exploded. I heard a strong sound, then I fainted."

Ibrahim's next remembered waking up in hospital, alive, but in excruciating pain. He had lost five fingers of his left hand, four fingers of his right hand, his left eye and most of the vision from his right eye. After the landmine explosion, Ibrahim hadn't the courage to face the world, so he isolated himself and refused to go to school.

A year has since passed and Ibrahim's condition has improved, he is now in the 6th grade. "He is not the same psychologically. He has turned into a violent boy, even when he is with his brothers," his mother said in grief. "I urge every mother to watch over her children, even when they are playing," Umm Ibrahim said.

This case is not unique. Statistics show that every 20 minutes a man, woman or child is killed or seriously injured because of land mines (this means that every year around 26,000 people are innocently killed or injured all over the world).

Landmine Survivors Network (LSN) was established to meet this unfortunate demand, a non profitable society whose sole goal is to rehabilitate victims of landmines. The co-founder of the society is himself a landmine victim.

During a trip to the Golan Heights, Jerry White (the executive director) had a date with destiny. They are the weapon of the coward, which are too afraid to look you in the eye, White said angrily. Only 20 at the time, the landmine explosion deprived him of his right foot and ripped open his left calf and knee.

The landmine which maimed Jerry is one of thousands planted by Israel during the Arab-Israeli war in 1967. As a result of his own personal experience with landmines, White, a graduate of the US-based Brown University, began working for the Brookings Institution, later becoming the Assistant Director of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control. Then in 1997, the LSN





was established. They specifically targeted landmine victims and their hardwork was rewarded by the Convention on the Prohibition of Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines (commonly known as the Ottawa Treaty), which was signed by 127 nations—Algeria, Qatar, Tunisia and Yemen were the only Arab countries consenting.

Further recognition was gained when the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) was set up, which was rewarded the Nobel Peace Prize in December 1997 for its efforts to eliminate the indiscriminate killer (ICBL had Lady Diana, Princess of Wales, as patron, greatly increasing the amount of media coverage on the landmine issue).

Jordan has now taken up the anti-landmine campaign, with the first Middle East Conference on Landmine Injuries and Rehabilitation held recently in Amman, under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor. The Queen was pleased to inform the conference that the Jordanian cabinet had agreed to endorse the Ottawa Treaty. More than 33 countries attended the two-day meeting, and also present where 35 landmine survivors from around the world.

During the conference, General Nasser Majali explained how landmines are a major problem in Jordan. "The total number of mines still on Jordan soil is over 300,000, covering an area of almost 15,000 Acres. Since 1967, 400 people have been killed as a result of landmines," added the General.

In March 1993, Jordan started to implement a national demining program, aimed at clearing all the minefields. Phase One began in March 1993 and ended in March 1995. Thirty minefields were cleared in the past two-year period with more than 14,000 mines being removed from 600 acres of land. Phase Two started in May 1995 and is still continuing today. The results so far: 116 cleared minefields, half a million removed mines, covering 2,500 Acres of land. "There are 133 Israeli minefields in Wadi Araba, containing 73,853 mines of various types," Gen Majali continued.

The final words must go to Kamel Saedi from Jordan, who attended the conference—a member of the LSN and himself a landmine survivor. "It's not a matter of who is responsible now; it is time to move forward and find a solution to the problem. The sound I heard the moment I stepped on the mine will stick in my mind for ever." Saedi lost 20 centimeters of his leg, between the foot and his knee, and had to have three surgical operations. The incident had immence affect on him that he changed from studying computing, and now advises landmine survivors on the latest artificial limb technology. ■



A view from downtown Madaba Trade Center where old shops were built in the beginning of this century. Other buildings were placed by new ones. Some shops are situated in Al Hashemi and King Talal streets . The buildings include single rooms with flat ceilings and no windows. The doors have arches and protruding stones, while some shops have holes for ventilation.

Press Cocktail

Zeiydan, and the Arab situation

☛ Writings on the World Cup, which has just finished with a French victory in Paris, has occupied the thoughts of many columnists in Jordanian newspapers. Dr Nabeel Al Sharief, chief editor of Ad Dustour, was the first to kick off. He said as France beat Brazil 3-0, we in the Arab world remembered that Zein Al Din Zeiydan, a French national, is of Arab origin. He added that we felt very happy accross the region as newspapers began to concentrate on this French football player, whose father and mother are Algerians.

Zeiydan may have been the most surprised by the Arab reaction, indeed such reaction may have been a sources of embarrasment, for he is a French national to the bone, and his blue T-shirt is a source of immence pride.

What Zeiydan doesn't know is that, Sharief says, this nation has been searching for a hero for centuries....to move away from the series of defeats, disappointments, and depression that have faced people in the Arab world.

He continues that we look around us and see all the people of the world feel proud of something or some one, however, "we can't find anything in the Arab world that would make us contented." He adds that politically we have become very weak, and therefore an easy prey for other who abuse our land and water. Furthermore, even the economic situation has reached its lowest, and strangers have come to dominate our economic potentials. Also it has become impossible for Arabs to have a chance to meet and discuss such a critical situation.

However, we feel proud that Zeidan has achieved a victory for us. Had he not immigrated from the Arab world, would he have achieved such a victory, or would he have added one more number to the so many who are frustrated in the area.

Al Bashir hospital

☛ This week the Al Bashir Hospital comes under the spotlight. Columnist Nazih Al Kassous, writing in *Ad Dustour* focuses on the endless queues of outpatients. He says that because, it is the only government hospital for the whole of the capital, Al Bashir Hospital is always over-crowded. Kassous emphasises the point for effect. He says everywhere you go you have to wait hours on end: if you want to see a doctor you have to wait, the same is true for getting your medicine from the pharmacy, or even waiting to pay your nominal bill. While the the columnist appreciates the recent government effort to revamp the hospital by injecting JD 20 million, he says work is needed quickly to cope with the human mass. The immediate needs of the hospital is more doctors, nurses and general personnel.

Shura vote!

☛ The results of the elections to the 45-seat Shura Council of the Muslim Brotherhood brought few surprises. The hawks (hardliners) and moderates remain in the driving seat. Hawks include Ahmed Al Kofahi, Mohammad Abu Faris, Qandeel Shaker, Hussein Khandaq, Abdel Jaleel Al Awadeh, and Hitham Abu Al Ragheb, although analysts say that there could be a dent in the hawkish trend with the loss of Hamam Saeed, and Ibrahim Massoud Al Khreisat.

Moderates including Jameel Abu Baker, Salim Al Falahat, Imad Abu Dia, Dawood Qujak and Masoud Abu Mahfouz, also won seats on the Council.

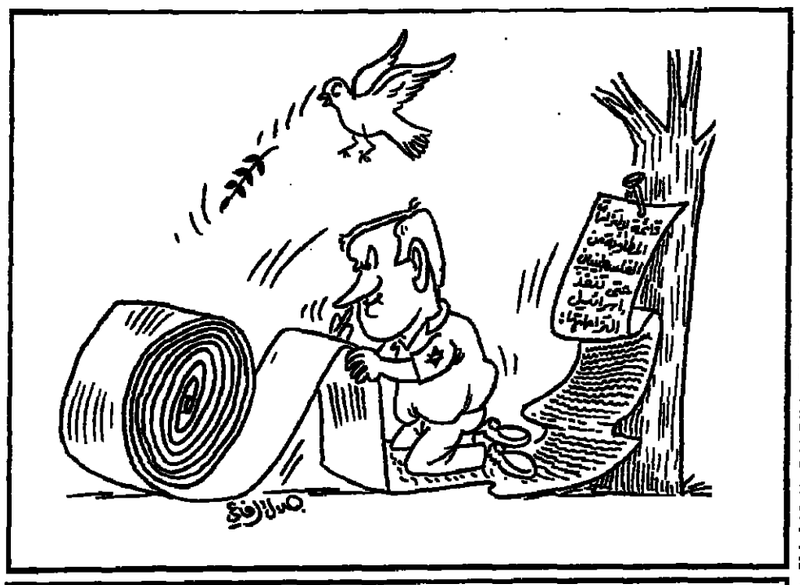
The doves (liberals), it would seem, have taken a bit of a beating in the elections. The new general secretary of the IAF Abdel Latif Arabyat lost his seat. He wanted to withdraw just before the elections but was prevented from doing so by regulations.

Ishaq Al Farhan and Abd Al Raheem Al Ukoor also failed to make it. Doves like Hamza Mansour, Mohammad Owaideh, and Ibrahin Zeid Al Kilani failed to stand, thus weakening this trend in the Brotherhood. However, it is difficult to quantify the elections in terms of actual policies or say that the Islamic movement is definitely leaning further to the right and becoming more hardline.

Members from all three trends, in fact, agreed to boycott the last parliamentary elections, and all, with the exception of a few like Abdallah Al Akaileh, and Bassem Al Umoush, have agreed that the political fortunes of the Muslim Brotherhood depend upon building grass-roots support, which is exactly what has been happening. In the last six months they have won elections in professional associations, as well as student councils all over the Kingdom.

Cynics may sneer and say that this doesn't prove anything, since traditionally these institutions are the bedrock of Islamist support, but some experts suggest otherwise. They point out that these results not only show that street level support is solid, but that people are backing an Islamic movement that continues to be strident.





Our Say. . .

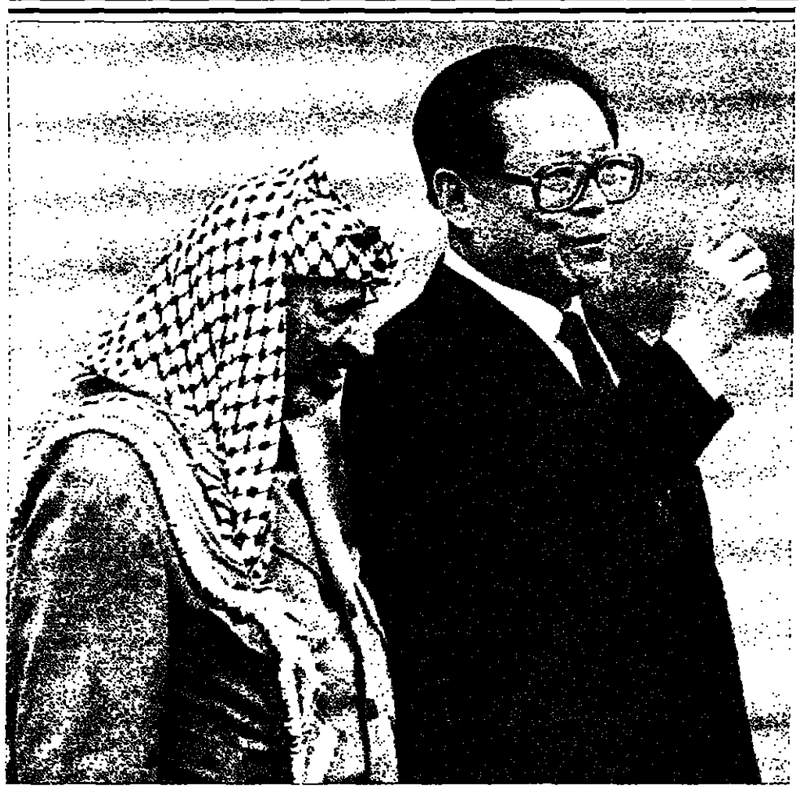
Noor revives mines issue

JORDAN BECAME the 128th nation to sign the Ottawa Treaty banning the production, use and stockpiling of landmines. Her Majesty Queen Noor announced the decision at a two-day conference on helping landmine victims in the Middle East which opened in Amman on Saturday. She also assured that Jordan, which had stopped importing landmines in 1974, will never do so again in the future.

There are 185,000 landmines in Jordan still to be cleared. Sixty-five thousand have been cleared in the last five years. Most of them date back to the 1967 war with Israel. The figures indicate the enormity of the problem even in a small country like Jordan, and the immense threat it poses to people. There are two aspects to the problem which need to be addressed. First, the defusion of the mines. Second, therehabilitation of landmine victims. Queen Noor emphasised the need for technical assistance from the West to clear the landmines.

The issue of landmines had receded into the background in the last few months. Last year, Diana, the Princess of Wales, lent her image to the cause by making a high-profile visit to Bosnia. Cynics and critics pooh-poohed her gesture, but it did help in highlighting the chilling facts about thousands of landmine victims, the majority of whom are civilians and children, who are either killed or maimed for life as a result of landmine explosions.

The conference on landmines, which was convened soon after Diana's tragic death in a Paris car crash last August, was able to push through the Ottawa Treaty. Soon after, Jody Williams, one of the most vocal campaigners for the ban of landmines, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace for 1997. So far, 23 countries have ratified the convention. It would be binding on the international community if 40 countries ratify it. Political leaders and military experts are prone to push the question of landmines into the background because it poses many uncomfortable questions and the solutions require huge sums of money and greater coordination among governments. Queen Noor's high-profile presence could give a much needed boost to the campaign against landmines. She should be able to bring the issue back on the world agenda. She is intelligent and glamorous, and people-from decision makers to those on the street—will be made aware of this serious problem. Her contribution to the campaign will be of great value. It is not surprising that the voices against landmines have been mostly that of women. Throughout history, men have wrought destruction, whilst women have brought the healing touch.■



Chinese President Jiang Zemin (R) gestures as he chats with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat during the welcoming ceremony at the east gate of the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, 13 July. Arafat received a red carpet treatment and 21-gun salute which was identical to that given to US President Bill Clinton during his visit last month.

AFP Photo

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"Cappuccino"

Coffee, justice and the PNA

By Dr Eyad El-Sarraj

NEW YORK is a city that never sleeps. It has everything that other cities have to offer and more. It has culture, restaurants, the United Nations, hundreds of statues, and tens of public parks, notably the University park where a lot of people play chess. Also, New York laws ban smoking in restaurants and public places despite the fact that the US floods the world with tobacco and cigarettes.

However, American coffee is weak and does not satisfy a Palestinian from Gaza used to tens of thickly brewed Turkish coffee. I was glad that New York offers a famous Italian treat, not the Mafia, but strong Italian Coffee.

On a beautiful morning, I sat in a cafe to read the newspapers. I ordered expresso coffee; but the waiter brought me cappuccino instead. My disappointment reminded me of the "cappuccino" in Palestinian courts. The case was that of a customer who was not satisfied with the cappuccino he got in a local restaurant and sued them. The dispute between the disgruntled customer and the restaurant took two years to resolve in Palestinian courts, and cost the taxpayer a lot of money.

I followed the "cappuccino case" with a few friends who still laugh at the mention of it. I was amazed at how a dispute over a cup of cappuccino could go through the Palestinian judicial system from the complaint, to the different court processes, appeals, and ending with the verdict. The "cappuccino case" was a great example of how citizens practice their rights, and how the judiciary respects these rights.

At the same time, cases that greatly outweigh the importance of this one do not get their due attention; and if a court issues an order in these cases, it is not implemented. Moreover, judges are sometimes punished for issuing a verdict in such cases. In addition, there are cases in which decisions are interfered with.



An eyesore! Gaza still needs much improvement to upgrade quality of life

All of this is being done under strange and false justifications such as pressure from Israel and the United States forcing the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to detain people without trial, even if the High Court and Attorney General order their release. Although we understand the need to adhere to the Oslo Accords, which Israel is not too keen on doing, it is not clear where in the Accord it is stated to disobey the law and disregard court decisions.

Another excuse for ignoring judicial decisions is that the High Court, internationally known as the last resort to enforce justice and give people their rights, "has no authority to take such decisions", as was stated by Brigadier Jabali. The critics of the PNA can only conclude that the PNA does not, in fact, respect the "institution", and considers any "institution" a threat. This is enforced by the PNA's frequent disregard of the courts or interfering in their proceedings.

This understanding is also affirmed by the Authority's negative attitude towards the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). For example, the last episode between the PLC and the Authority was over the vote of confidence. Although the Cabinet has the backing of the vast majority of PLC members, the Executive Branch does not want the Council to exercise its duties. It is thus clear that the Executive Authority does not want an independent council, and wants to hold all the reigns of power.

Alas, all the talk about the Cabinet reshuffle will remain only hot air regardless of how many ministers are changed. As long as the PNA perceives the "institution" with suspicion and distrust, the Cabinet reshuffle will only be like adding milk to the coffee we already know the taste of.■

Eyad El-Sarraj is the founder and director of the Gaza Community Mental Health Program (GCMHP). He is also the Commissioner-General of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights. Palestinian authorities have arrested him twice in the past

A view from America:

Truth in journalism

By Carrie Nelle Moye
US Star Correspondent

NO DOUBT most societies—certainly those in the West—have publications that thrive on the sensational, they are fueled by gossip, and play with the truth, and sell well, but just border on newsworthiness.

The reverse side of the coin is that most professional journalists pride themselves on seeking the truth—facts only—if they are presenting articles and opinions based-on-fact when presenting editorials. The search for the truth and adherence to this code has allowed bona fide journalists to hold their heads high as they proudly announce they are members of the "fourth estate."

In the United States we have been almost condescending in our unspoken pledge to present the facts, uncluttered by emotions (again, excepting editorials, of course).

It would be more than naive to say that biased or false reporting has not and does not occur. One need only examine the biased writings on the Middle East over the past half decade to know that prejudice has been ever present. Most writing in this part of the world is somewhat slanted, even in respected journals. However, the discriminating reader soon discerns where the truth lies.

But there is a disturbing trend creeping into legitimite journalism in America which is making the profession reexamine itself and question just how far a writer will go to receive acclaim and fame. Several cases which have come to the fore in the last few weeks. The first was that of freelancer Stephen Glass. It seems that he allegedly fabricated some of this articles purely to get attention and recognition.

Then there was the case of Patricia Smith, until recently a respected journalist at the Boston Globe. It appears Smith was creating sources and subsequent quotes to give authenticity to her columns. She was released from the paper and her future in the profession, like that of Glass, is ruined.

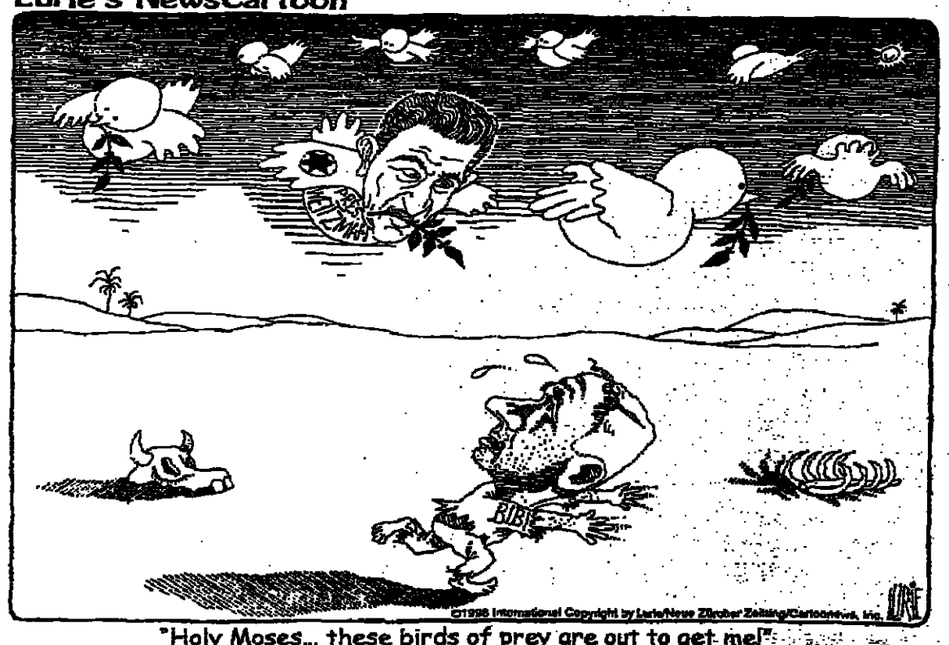
Yet another respected journal, The Cincinnati Enquirer, made a public apology to the Chiquita Banana Company for publishing a series of articles that questioned the company's business practices. In addition to firing the lead reporter of the articles, Mike Gallagher. The Enquirer has offered to pay $10 million to Chiquita to settle any legal claims that may come as a result of the incorrect information that was printed. At this point, we, the public, have not been told just what in the series of articles was untrue, but $10 million is a lot of money so one can only assume there were gross misstatements.

The good news regarding all the above is that journalism is making a serious effort to police itself. The bad news is that one must ask why legitimate (versus gossip) journalists are discarding ethical standards in their reporting, and secondly, how far has this seeped into American journalism, especially in the more respected newspapers?

I never say that the American press has constantly fabricated information to sell papers but traditionally, it has always been the realm of news journalists to pounce upon dirty politicians, and expose societal injustices. In other words, it has not been the federal or state government, but the news medium which has acted as the conscience of the nation. That seems to be changing.

Perhaps the apparent 'slip' in journalistic ethics is a reflection of change in society's moral code—a change lamented by an increasing number of religious, governmental, and civic organizations. When a journalist becomes a mere mouthpiece for the highest bidder, society, both nationally and internationally, will suffer. The alarm has been sounded.■

Lurie's NewsCartoon



"Holy Moses... these birds of prey are out to get me!"

(NEWS ITEM: Israel's President Weizman openly suggested to Premier Netanyahu to commence early elections for the purpose of advancing Mideast peace.)

Middle East Beat
by Khairi Janbek

Appeal for citizenship

IN A hierarchical society, it was natural for wealthy patricians to manipulate the activities of the lower orders. Each "Patronus" retained a following of dependent "Clients." The patron expected his followers to support his policies and candidates. Clients expected a material reward.

It was patronage that gave the Roman government a blend of democratic reforms and oligarchic control. Assemblies, office rotation, and need for frequent meetings created a sense of belonging.

Every Roman citizen knew exactly where he stood with regard to his tribe, clan, family. Although relevant to Roman ascendancy, it resembles a leaf taken out of the book of Arab affairs.

Historical precedence lead to a stable society, the modern Arab paradigm indicates a sense of decline in which competing groups attempt to have a bite at the state, and present themselves as alternatives to ruling structures. Various groupings have become instruments in the balancing game between state structure and opposing groupings, each gaining favors at different times.

The same model may be applied to many other socially developed systems, in which pressure groups of one variety or another, act as part of the checks and balances on state powers. But who would have thought, a few years ago, that Yugoslavia would have disintegrated into a blood bath? And the Monte Carlo of the Middle East, Lebanon, go through death and carnage.

The strength of the state is not manifested by the powers it can exert, but more importantly, in the cohesion it can provide for all its citizens, by giving a stake for every individual in the running and preserving the gains achieved.

For us in the Arab world, we must work on enhancing the relationship between citizen and state by creating the title of a citizen. The balancing act between groupings, tribal constructions, as well as regions across the whole Arab map, does not provide a comfortable prospect for continuity.

The state must recognize that the citizen is a tax-payer and has the right to demand the services ascribed to it in proportion to the taxes paid. Such a bonding is usually based on reciprocity rather than favoritism. The citizen responds to the state in terms of loyalty to the political superstructures, rather than multiple groupings or tribal affiliations.

All citizens must be equal before the law. In this sense, the best state is the one that subjects itself to the laws of the country. To be bogged down by ethnicity, religious devotion, regionalism, and bogus affiliations is a negation to belonging.

Therefore, the promotion of the idea of citizenship must be coupled with the promotion of meritocracy, as opposed. Peoples' ethnic origins, religious devotion, and places of geographical residence are all part of the composition of the state. They are important factors in determining its possibilities but can never determine which possibilities are likely to triumph.

It is important to have a sense of identity with the nation-state in the Arab world, before we can talk about a supra-identity. If we still find it difficult to think outside narrow one-dimensional belongings, then we are not likely to evolve beyond primitive social structures.■

Business scene

■ The Bank of Jordan and the Gulf decided to raise its capital to JD 40 million, a rise of JD 20 million. The Bank's management regards this as a step to enhance its banking solvency and support its financial and competitive position in the market. The Bank's annual report revealed that fixed assets rose from JD 5.2 million in 1996 to JD 6.6 million in 1997, an increase of JD 1.35 million. The Bank generated a profit of JD 108,000. and now plans to increase its capital every year by JD 5 million over three years by boosting the volume of its operations and activities.

■ The Government's next five year plan (1999-2002) gives priority to eliminating poverty and reducing unemployment. Its agenda promises to create about 297,000 job opportunities, and aim for real and sustained growth in the gross domestic product (GDP), exceeding the expected growth in population. The plan also hopes to achieve a satisfactory growth in the volume of exports, curtail the budget deficit and reduce the level of debt. The plan also aims to cut the population growth to 3.1 percent in 2002, and to upgrade infrastructure projects in poor areas throughout the kingdom.

■ The Arab Bank continues to prove that it is a key player in share dealings at Amman Financial Market (AFM). Demand for the Bank's shares from local and Arab investors rose sharply as their value hit JD 215 last Sunday. By mid week, however shares had stabilized at JD 201.5.

The volume of traded shares reached 31,690 with a turnover of JD 6.8 million. Total shares traded in the banking sector reached 146,200. Stocks were valued at JD 7 million.

■ The UN Sanctions Committee has approved five export contracts for Jordanian companies. These are worth $7.1 million, and are in line with the third phase of the oil for food deal. Exported goods include pharmaceuticals, medical supplies, and vegetable oil.

Business conference hopes to boost economy, attract investors

By Ilham Sadiq
Star Staff Writer

BUSINESS AND investment is the name of the game. Jordanian business bodies, investors, public and private institutions and Jordanian embassies overeas abroad are busy preparing for the First Conference for Jordanian Businessmen and Investors, to be held 7-11 September at the Radisson SAS Hotel.

The conference's slogan "Together to build the Jordan of tomorrow," contrasts with the prevailing gloomy economic situation in Jordan and the region as a whole. However, it highlights the importance of the Jordanian business community to the state of the national economy.

The Jordanian Businessmen's Association (JBA) and the Investment Promotion Corporation (IPC) hope that the conference will attract Jordanian capital and investment from overseas.

The event, held under the patronage of HM King Hussein, will provide delegates with information about the economic situation and the investment climate in Jordan.

Mr Hamdi Tabba'a, President of JBA, told *The Star* "the conference will provide a good forum and opportunity to exchange views and experiences."

Mr Tabba'a who is also the chairman of the conference's Higher Preparatory Committee, added that the event would strengthen existing links and relations between businessmen and create strong new ones based on a solid faith in Jordan.

Referring to the objectives of the conference, Mr Tabba'a pointed out that "since the last Jordanian expatriate conference held in 1988, there has been a need for a well-organized mechanism to bring together Jordanian expatriates from various sectors and locations in their home country."

He added that this conference, and follow-up events, are urgently required in the country, which will undoubtedly benefit from the potential and capabilities of Jordanian expatriates.

At present, investment projects being financed or carried out in the Kingdom are motivated by individuals, because of the lack of a framework to unite Jordanian businessmen. "We hope to make the conference a real success, and attract expatriate capital to the kingdom by offering them this well planned mechanism," said Mr Ali Yousef, JBA director general.

The total number of participants is expected to reach 500-600, including local and overseas businessmen, he added. Mr Yousef, who is also the general co-ordinator of the conference, expressed hopes that it will act as a milestone for quarterly gatherings to help Jordanian businessmen meet and establish joint ventures and sound relations.

"We are longing to establish an international network to collect data about Jordanian expatriate investors and businessmen and maintain permanent coordination and dialogue with their counterparts in Jordan," he said.

The objectives of the conference are not merely material or financial. Mr Yousef also stressed, "People who own capital plus have management and high-tech skills will be a great gain to the country if we manage to attract them and attract their capital."

Conferences have proved in the past to be a successful way of attracting investments. Mr Yousef maintains, "It's true that most capital does belong to expatriate businessmen and is accumulated outside the Kingdom, but why should we not bring it back to the home country of these businessmen? If we do, we'll be able to help the economy recover and prosper."

Furthermore, conferences can help to promote the export potential of local products. The Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centers Company (JEDCO) regards the forthcoming conference as a golden opportunity to make expatriate businessmen aware of the marketing opportunities available to promote local products.

"The conference will give us a chance to let participants get acquainted with latest developments in the country, including marketing services and investment opportunities," said Mr Farouk Al Hadeedi, JEDCO's director general.

Mr Hadeedi, also a member of the conference's Higher Preparatory Committee, said that that, so far, all the signs point to a positive outcome. He expects many participants to attend, mainly from the Gulf and Europe.

However, some Jordanian businessmen are not so optimistic. One prospective participant in the coming conference, member of the JBA, and general director of the National Company for Supplies, Mr Sami Shreim, hopes that the venue will help to ease the worsening economic situation, by concluding joint venture agreements between expatriate businessmen and their counterparts in the Kingdom.



Tabba'a

However, he pointed out that the government had been asked to speed up the approval of its package of economic legislation. "If such laws are endorsed, we could get rid of the routine hindrances that kill investment bids in Jordan. We could also clarify the investment environment in Jordan and highlight incentives to attract capital," Mr Shreim said.

It is estimated that about $6 billion worth of Jordanian investments are being carried out abroad. The conference could provide a formula to pull this investment capital back into the Kingdom and save our ailing economy. However, Mr Shreim added that he hopes an end to the recession will also come from increased competition between the public and private sectors.

Engineer Ibrahim Zureiq, does not place so much faith in the conference, though he is planning to attend. "I don't mean to be pessimistic about the possible outcome of the conference, but I personally don't put high expectations on any conference," he said, referring to many of the mega projects concluded at the MENA summit held in Amman in1995 that never got beyond the drawing board.

Legislation needs to be amended to end bureaucratic practices that hinder investments. "Interest rates on loans are too high (about 14%) compared to overseas (about 7%), and this is an obstacle that investors face, and they hesitate to take a risk by pumping their capital into a dull, unstable market," said Mr Zureiq, the director of Zureiq Trading Establishment.

A few of the many papers scheduled for the conference agenda: the prospects of the Jordanian economy, the investment environment, privatization programs in Jordan, investment opportunities in the tourism, mining, electricity and insurance sectors. Of course these are subject to minor changes. ■



Egyptian Minister of Health Ismael Salam (center), and his Iraqi counterpart, Omeed Midhat Mubarak (left) during the opening of the Egyptian Health Exhibition that started in Baghdad, early this week. Mr Salam is heading a delegation that represents 15 Egyptian medical companies.

Solving the growing problem of unemployment

By Ilham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer

AS THE countdown to the national conference on unemployment approaches, people are openly discussing their doubts about the chance of finding a real solution to the problem.

However, it is premature to be either optimistic or pessimistic about the success or failure of the conference, as many issues must be taken into consideration.

It is reported that there are about 180,000 applications from graduates still awaiting approval at the Civil Service Commission. This contrasts starkly with the fact that there are only 4000 new job opportunities in the government sector, mainly in the Ministries of Health and Education.

In addition, when you consider that about 100,000 students have just sat the *Tawjihi* exams, it is obvious that the problem can only get worse—the number of unemployed will continue to rise dramatically.

If it is assumed that about 50 percent of this number will pass their *Tawjihi* exams, where they will go? The universities can not possibly absorb this figure. Private universities and community colleges only provide the solution for students fortunate enough to be able to afford the exorbitant fees, plus expenses.

What will be the fate of those who cannot afford this option? Are these newly unemployed young people simply expected to take their chances in a labor market that can not possibly support them?

Take it one step further—a recent scientific study revealed many instances of crime committed by young people can be linked to their inability to find a job. It is logical. Jobless people must make a living too, and desperate situations often require desperate measures.

Then there is the problem of "shame culture", or social stigma, which prevents people accepting manual labor as an acceptable work option. People must be reeducated to dismiss the idea that there is anything demeaning about this kind of work.



Waiting for a job!

Connected to this is the problem of non-Jordanian manpower who currently fill the gap. There are estimated to be about 400,000 such workers (though some sources said that they are even more than 600,000). Available statistics suggest that only 15,000 non-Jordanian workers have licences, so how do the remaining thousands work?

Another issue concerns the inability of vocational training schools to meet the market's needs. If we can't upgrade or alter our educational strategies, put restrictions on the non-Jordanian workforce, change people's notions about certain professions, or carry out big investments to create real job opportunities, will we ever see an end to the unemployment phenomenon that is threatening our economy?

That is why so many hopes are now pinned on the upcoming conference on unemployment.

Some argue that the solution lies in the hands of the private sector, which has been asked to cooperate closely with the government to come up with a suitable remedy.

Meanwhile, professional associations are being asked to convey the public's views and suggestions to the conference, sponsored by the Ministry of Administrative development.

Mr Fathallah Al Omrani, President of the Workers Federation, points to some suggestions that may help put an end to the phenomenon.

Firstly, the level of wages could be fixed to give local workers an incentive to enter the labor market.

Secondly, Al Omrani suggests that some aspects of the law, concerning labor, social security and health insurance, are altered to encourage jobseekers to join certain professions. Finally, he stresses that it is imperative that the labor market is controlled and that restrictions are placed on the non-Jordanian workforce.

There are further measures to reduce the scale of unemployment which should also be discussed, such as intensifying efforts to encourage investment, joint development projects and industrial projects in the public and private sectors.

Mr Mahmoud Al Ma'aytah, speaking on behalf of the Association of Workers in Land Transport and Mechanics, stressed that some articles in the labor law will be amended and that wages must also be raised to attract workers.

Mr Khalil Hiyasat, President of the Association of Workers in Airlines and Tourism, said that educational policies in the kingdom should be reviewed to comply with the requirements of the labor market and fresh graduates must be encouraged to join centers of vocational training.

To conclude, solving the problem of unemployment means the Government must recognize the need to amend educational policies, stress the importance of facilitating vocational training, and put stricter controls on the non-Jordanian workforce. ■

Foreign Exchange

Wednesday, 8 JULY

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US $	0.7080	0.7100
£	1.1510	1.1568
DM	0.4124	0.4145
SFr	0.4801	0.4825
FRF	0.1227	0.1233
YEN (100)	0.5624	0.5652
DEL	0.3667	0.3685
LIT (100)	0.0419	0.0421



Anxious Kuwait dealers at the Kuwait Stock Exchange gather as the index closed 11 June at 1996.8 points, its lowest level for 18 months and below the psychological 2,000 points barrier. Anxieties over proposed bad debt law amendments, political tensions, economic hardships from the low oil price, and the Asian crisis have all contributed to a loss of investor faith in the market.

AFP photo

Russia's debt deepens to 44 percent of net worth

By Carol J. Williams

MOSCOW—RUSSIA'S escalating financial crisis is fomenting social unrest and its debts have amassed to a shocking 44 percent of the country's net worth, Prime Minister Sergei V. Kiriyenko warned this week.

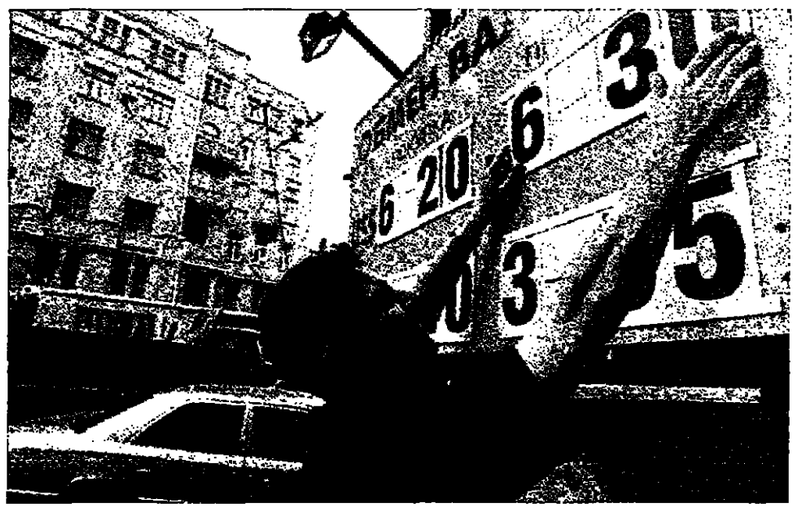
His disclosures, in a speech to the Upper House of Parliament, succeeded in winning support from the Federation Council for the government's stabilization program. They also are likely to intensify pressure on international lending institutions to bail out Russia.

But Kiriyenko's sobering observations also shed light on the swiftly accelerating nature of Russia's crisis, as it borrows more staggering sums at mounting interest rates each week to pay off earlier debts.

"The financial market has practically ceased to exist," the dour prime minister told lawmakers, whose approval in principle of the crisis-easing measures means little until the more contentious lower house votes likewise. "Tensions are rising in society and this is naturally not helpful for stabilization."

Government debts now amount to 44 percent of Russia's gross domestic product, he noted. That confronts this country with woes analagous to what an American family might face if it had a household income of $100,000 a year, with $44,000 in debts on credit cards with soaring interest rates.

Only a month ago, the prime minister put the debt-share at less than one-third of GDP; the debt has risen as a percentage so sharply, in part because the value of goods and services in this nation's economy—what GDP reflects—also has plummeted.



The clark of a currency exchange office in Moscow changes the rates on the information board, Russia's central bank spent almost a billion dollars of its depleted reserves last week defending the under-pressure ruble.

AFP photo

In visible testimony to his warnings of brewing unrest, striking miners continued to disrupt freight traffic on the vital Trans-Siberian Railroad for a seventh day; politicians from both government and opposition ranks predict the worst is yet to come.

"The peak of social discontent has not been reached yet," warned Moscow Mayor Yuri M. Luzhkov, who harbors ambitions of succeeding President Boris N. Yeltsin in the next elections.

Russia's recurring liquidity problems have been made worse in recent months by financial instability throughout emerging markets and by the global slump in the price of oil—this country's No. 1 hard-currency-earning export.

The oil glut has already deprived Russia of $7 billion in expected revenues this year and Kiriyenko said he feared the shortfall would swell to $15 billion by the end of the year, forcing the government to delay more wages and pensions to state workers or to default on its mountain of debt.

"We are willing to consider any proposal, but we simply cannot fail to repay treasury bills," Kiriyenko told lawmakers who had urged the government to divert some of the debt-servicing funds to settle overdue wages to restless workers and impoverished retirees.

Russia has relied on sales of its abundant oil to fill government coffers and make up for its chronic failure to collect taxes. The plunge in oil prices has also delayed a vital cash infusion from the planned auction of shares in the state oil giant Rosneft.

The Privatization Ministry announced last Friday it was postponing the sell-off of 75 percent of Rosneft shares from this month until late October, in hopes that the market will recover enough to entice bidders at what is currently an unrealistic starting price of $1.6 billion. ■

MARKET WATCH 27-30 JUNE

Highest and lowest performing stocks in the Amman Financial Market

	SATURDAY	%	SUNDAY	%	MONDAY	%	TUESDAY	%
▲	• TADINCO • Nuqul Industry • Arab Investment Bank	5.11 5.56 4.64	• Irbid Electricity • United Industry • Zara Investment	5.26 5.00 5.17	• Al-Nisr Insurance • Irbid Electricity • TADINCO	5.06 5.00 5.30	• Union Bank • United Financial • Gulf Insurance	5.38 5.41 5.30
▼	• Al-Nisr Insurance • Industry Union • Trade Center	5.14 5.15 6.67	• Commercial Industry • National Cable • Industrial Resource	5.31 5.26 5.17	• Jordan Kuwiti Bank • Car Union • International Tourism	3.16 3.70 2.94	• National Steel • National Investment • United Industry	5.66 5.88 4.00

General Price Pointer	167.420	169.590	172.220	174.630		
Trade Volume	788.664	128.9190	897.038	1068477		
Stock Volume	569966	838927	560916	540029		
Highest Traded Stocks						
• Al-Ahli Bank	140975	• Tourism Hotels	289.180	• Dar Addawa	131.884	• Arab Bank	433.725

All data provided by Tel: 646868 Fax: 646949

Cairo's long-neglected ancient district poised for polish

By John Daniszewski

CAIRO, EGYPT—Along narrow Al Muizz Street, it is difficult to imagine that this tumbledown, trash-strewn lane was, in its day, the most important street of the most opulent city on Earth.

Today, it is far from glorious. Lost in the enormous sprawl of Cairo, this 1,000-year-old lane barely 15 feet wide is crowded with polluting aluminum smelters and other small workshops. Cars thread their way through throngs of pedestrians, and squatters hang laundry from dilapidated, earthquake-cracked buildings. Garbage is thrown into the adjoining alleys, and often there's a whiff of sewage in the air.

Overcrowding—more than 300,000 people live in the one square-mile area around Al Muizz—and urban decay are the lot of many a city.

But what makes this street and its environs different is that this quarter, for all of its decrepitude, contains what a UN study called the richest trove of medieval Islamic architecture in the world, once-amazing buildings dating from the 10th century up to the Ottoman period.

"If you call yourself Egyptian, you should weep at the condition of the monuments," says Gaballah Ali Gaballah, head of Egypt's Supreme Council on Antiquities, whose job is to rescue as much of the country's vast cultural heritage as possible on an annual budget of $80 million.

Now, Egypt's central government, the mayor of Cairo and the antiquities authority have announced a joint project to save 'historic Cairo,' as this medieval district is being called, before it crumbles into nothingness.

Based on a study by the UN Development Program—and with help anticipated from foreign donors, including the US government—they have an ambitious blueprint to restore buildings, evict polluters, ban automobiles and build a pair of underground tunnels that will allow the dismantling of a major thoroughfare that bisects the historic district.

Why did it take so long to try to stop this decline? One reason is that Egypt is awash with antiquities—and most of the state's limited means have been aimed at preserving the country's Pharaonic past. Medieval structures, less than 1,000 years old, were deemed barely worthy of notice. But the new market policies espoused by President Hosni Mubarak and his business-driven prime minister, Kamal Ganzouri, have given the plan a powerful economic incentive: the potential dollars to be made if a restored medieval Cairo can persuade tourists to extend their stays in Egypt a few days after seeing the Pyramids.

"We think we have a treasure in Cairo. We think that treasure can generate income—we have to search for that treasure as soon as possible," Mayor Abdel Rehim Shehata said.

By all accounts, the original medieval Cairo was a glory. It contained the world's largest and most spectacular mosques, imposing palaces, tiled fountains, fruits and pleasures of every description, all within towering high walls upon which two horsemen could canter abreast.

It was built in the 10th century as a palace city to inspire awe and fear of the caliph, who at the time ruled an empire stretching from Morocco to Arabia, and who controlled the lucrative spice caravans to the Orient and the gold-and-slave trade with the rest of Africa.

The Fatimids, Shiite believers from Tunisia striving to surpass the Sunni caliph in Baghdad, invaded Egypt in 969. In their triumph, they laid out a capital they named El Qahira—"the Victorious One."

On the profits of their military successes, the new city that rose above the Nile flood plain soon supplanted Baghdad as the richest city in Islam, and hence, at that time, the world, wrote historian-author Desmond Stewart.

Today, however, few of the monuments are in anything like a presentable state. Walls are cracked, and bricks and plaster are flaking or fallen. Sewage from the city's overburdened drainage system is eating foundations. In this century, as most of this area slowly became little more than a slum.

In the courtyard of one derelict 18th century palace, a previous government dug a bomb shelter. Fishmongers from the neighborhood around Bab el Zuwelya Gate, built 900 years ago, threw fish heads, rotting shrimps and other debris into a moat formed by rising ground water around El Salah Taleai mosque. A fetid green-grey pool of garbage resulted, standing for as long as the older residents could remember. When it was finally drained and cleared this year, delighted restorers discovered a medieval arcade of low, arched stone shops built into the side of the mosque.

Other once-grand houses were—and still are—used as garbage dumps, places to slaughter chickens or as convenient toilets by people seemingly oblivious to their intrinsic value and fine architectural details. These include mashrabaya windows—characterized by a wooden mesh intricately made without nails to give privacy to the women of the houses—inlaid cabinets and medieval stained-glass skylights.

The enormousness of the task facing restorers is daunting. "It's a long-term program," Mayor Shehata said. "We are not planning it for six months or one year—maybe it's going to take 20 years. But it has to start because many of the practices around the monuments have been very bad. It should have begun maybe 50 years ago."

Shehata said the city's role will include compelling owners of polluting workshops to switch to nonpolluting businesses or move. He estimates that 15 percent of the businesses may have to be evicted. The city is preparing an alternative site for them nearby, he said.

Everyone involved emphasizes that the intention is not to denude the area of its real people—the shouting merchants and the waterpipe-smoking coffeehouse denizens.

"We cannot make it a museum because the city is still alive and we are still living here," said Medhad Menabbawy, the antiquities director for the neighborhood, who offers visitors soft drinks in a cubicle in the bowels of a partially restored 14th-century palace.

But the area will be cleaned up and protected, shops will be required to put in new facades appropriate to the area's historic character, and the neighborhood will become a lure to visitors, Menabbawy promised. "We dream to be not less than old Rome or old Madrid," Menabbawy said.

A key aspect of the plan is to address the neighborhood as a whole and not just fix up the historic buildings. "If we are going to work in this area, we cannot work piecemeal. You have to upgrade the whole area: the streets, sewage, water and electricity. You have to reeducate the people," Gaballah said.

Cars eventually will be banned altogether, except for a few hours in the early morning when merchants can receive deliveries. "If it works out," Gaballah said, "you can have a pedestrian area in the heart of Cairo."

He said he does not yet know how Egypt will pay for the work, but he plans to approach the World Bank; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; Arabs in the wealthy Gulf countries; and Muslims the world over for help. "This is the heritage of mankind," he said. "We have to translate that practically: Ask mankind to help." ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Breakaway Somali region seeks compensation

By Ann M. Simmons

HARGEYSA, Somalia—The anguish still penetrates the cloudy brown eyes of Abdillahi Deria Madar as he recounts his brush with death in 1988 at the hands of troops loyal to former Somali dictator Mohamed Siad Barre.

With the help of a sympathetic soldier, Madar managed to escape from a lineup of about 800 of his fellow Issaq clansmen who were destined for execution by firing squad. The former businessman, now 65, hid in a dog's burrow and watched as scores of his compatriots—including his brother's wife and several of their children—were tied together in groups of 10 and shot in the back.



Memories of conflict continues to haunt the people of Somalia

It has never been doubted that hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Somalis from minority clans in the country's northwest region—which today calls itself Somaliland—were slain under the Barre regime, which lasted more than 20 years. But the reality hit home last year, when skeletons in several mass graves began to surface following torrential rains and flooding that ravaged Somalia's northwest.

Today, residents of Somaliland, which in 1991 declared its independence from the rest of Somalia, want justice.

Authorities in Hargeysa, Somaliland's capital city, are appealing to the international community to create a war crimes tribunal—similar to those set up for Rwanda and the former Yugoslav federation—to judge and punish those who murdered and persecuted Somalia's northern clans during the Barre dictatorship. The worst atrocities came between 1988 and 1991, according to survivors, after inter-clan fighting and the Somaliland rebels' push for independence put the northwest under severe attack.

The Somalis' plea comes at a time when the United Nations is convening a five-week conference on the establishment of an international criminal court that would bring perpetrators of crimes against humanity to justice.

And though forensic experts and an independent foreign human rights investigator have confirmed that massacres took place in northern Somalia—and people were clearly tied together, lined up, shot and dumped in common graves—few believe that the people of Somaliland will ever get the consolation and compensation they seek.

Many blame a lack of interest on the part of the international community. "It always comes down to political will," said a Geneva-based UN expert in international criminal law.

Few countries have had much sympathy for Somalia since a UN humanitarian peacekeeping mission there crumbled in 1992 after 18 US servicemen were killed. The country remains divided among rival warlords and without a central government.

The constant threat of abduction and extortion that international relief workers face countrywide has not helped matters.

"Somalia is seen as a failed UN operation," said Mona Rishmawi, the independent expert for the UN high commissioner for human rights who investigated the mass graves in Somaliland. "I don't know if the international community is willing to invest more (there).

"The moment there is more stability and more security ... then these chapters can be reopened," she said. But since Somalia has made little progress toward a peace agreement and since the U.N. is unwilling to deal with Somaliland as a separate entity, the people here face an interminable wait.

With hopes that a judgment day will eventually arrive, authorities in Hargeysa established a war crimes committee in April to investigate and document alleged Barre-era human rights violations, including arbitrary executions, torture, rape, looting and destruction of property. Some of the alleged perpetrators still control regions of the country and have even been called upon by the international community to negotiate a settlement on Somalia.

Forensic experts have given the committee some training in how to dig up mass graves, analyze the bones to determine cause of death, and carefully preserve the evidence.

And the committee has tracked down scores of witnesses and suspects—most significantly, the operator of the bulldozer that dug the mass graves.

Survivors queued for hours to register the identities of missing loved ones, most thought to be dead. So far, more than 1,000 names have been registered.

"People were very emotional," recalled Hassan Aw Barakalle, a member of the war crimes committee. "Many cried, and asked about compensation, and why we were doing this, and whether the accused would be taken to court."

The testimonies are gut-wrenching. Zahra Mahamed Muhumed, 25, believes her stepson, Abdi Noor Naaleeye, was bled to death—a common form of execution, according to Somalis—in a local hospital after being captured by Barre soldiers in the spring of 1988.

The 20-year-old's body, clad in blue jeans and a red T-shirt, was dumped in a mass grave on the banks of the Hargeysa River, Muhumed said. She was one of the hundreds who rushed to the shore upon hearing that the graves had surfaced.

Bones, shoes, watches and jewelry still litter the soft sand dunes that border the now-dried-up river. Rope, still in the shape of the loops that tied the wrists or ankles of the deceased, are a bitter indication that those killed had no means of escape.

Rishmawi estimates that up to 2,000 people were massacred and buried in common graves, primarily in a two-month period in 1988, when Hargeysa was constantly being shelled. The first site, excavated in December, contained about 200 bodies.

The people of Somaliland believe that the death toll is significantly higher, claiming that almost every family in this republic of about 4.2 million people lost at least one relative.

The victims may have included former Somali government soldiers from rival clans that opposed the dictator's regime. In addition, Somaliland militias may have executed Ethiopian refugees who collaborated with Barre, as well as government loyalists captured immediately after the dictatorship was toppled in 1991. However, the vast majority of the dead are believed to be civilians.

Madar, the lucky escapee, is haunted by the memory of a woman holding her child above her head and begging the soldiers to spare the infant's life. The soldiers shot her on the spot, and then her child.

Madar, the 11th man in a lineup of 10, was pushed aside and told to wait, but the executioners kept ignoring him. A soldier standing guard, intrigued by Madar's good fortune, allowed him to jump to freedom over a nearby wall.

Some observers believe the authorities in Hargeysa want to exploit the war crimes issue for political ends—namely, as a way of justifying Somaliland's separation from the rest of Somalia.

"They want to assert that they were persecuted and systematically killed, and this is why they can't join (Somalia)," Rishmawi said.

Madar, who lost everything he owned during Somaliland's struggle for independence, confirmed this point.

"What really makes me angry is when I hear some talk about reconciliation, that we should unite together as one Somalia," he said. "But no one has ever said sorry for what happened." ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

US arm twisting breaks deadlock in peace talks

The Star and combined Agencies

IT SEEMS that the Palestinians and the Israelis could make it back to the negotiating table after a 15-month deadlock. The Americans have been trying to get the two sides to sit down, but with no luck.

However, it was announced earlier this week that Palestinian leaders and Israeli government officials will now sit down together and resume negotiations.

However, observers are cautious and point out that Israel still maintains a hardline stance with regard to redeployment from the West Bank and on the issue of resettlement.

Negotiations between Israel and the US have been long and arduous. While the US has insisted on a 13 percent withdrawal, observers say that they have bowed to Israeli pressure.

By arm twisting, Washington is now pressing the Palestinians to accept a plan under which Israel would hand over only nine percent of the West Bank to their control.

If the Palestinians agree, they will control 30 cantons in the West Bank, separated from each other by by-pass roads for the Jewish settlers and cut off from Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

The proposals, drawn up by Israel and foisted upon the US, amount to a watered-down version of an earlier Washington plan. That plan, suggested Israel hand over 13 per cent of the West Bank to the Palestinians in the delayed second troop pullback.

Madeleine Albright, US secretary of state, believed it was a workable compromise capable of bridging the gap between the two sides.

Israeli and Palestinian expectations, Israel claimed, for security reasons, it could not hand over more than 9 percent of land while the Palestinians originally expected getting around 30 percent in the troop pullback.

Less than 3 percent, or Area A of the West Bank, is under full Palestinian control. Some 26 per percent, Area B, is under Palestinian civilian administration but Israeli military control. The rest, Area C, is under the military control of Israel, which also controls all building activities.

Yassir Arafat, Palestinian Authority President, accepted Washington's 13 per cent package, but no less. "We are not prepared to accept 9 per cent," said Saeb Erekat, Palestinian chief negotiator who last week held talks in Washington with Mrs Albright.

The US intends to "dress up" the new package by arguing that the amount of land being handed over to the Palestinians does not deviate from Washington's original proposals.

In practice, Israel will hand over 9 percent of land, but the remaining 4 percent would be given a new status—"Area D". It will include land located close to the Jewish settlements in the West Bank in which Israel will have full military authority and control over certain civilian areas. "We will never get this land," said Mr Erekat.

Mrs Albright, in the meantime, has called on Israelis and Palestinians to hold face-to-face talks. Talks were cut off in March 1997 when Israel started building a new Jewish settlement at Har Homa in east Jerusalem. "The US wants to be in the position of blaming either side if the peace process collapses," said Mr Erekat. ■

Severity of Sudanese famine outstripping relief efforts

By John Daniszewski

MAPEL, Sudan—Death touched Manut Nong on the road between Tonj and Mapel. It took his father first, then his mother. Manut stumbled on weakly to finish their quest.

Now the teen-age boy sits on the red gravel outside the Save the Children camp here, his wasted body a confusion of sharp angles, bent knees and elbows, bowed head in his hand, as tears flow silently down his cheeks. He is naked except for a dirty brown shirt that reaches his thighs.

"I am hungry. I need something to eat," he tells a knot of people who have gathered to stare.

"She was not talking. She just fell down and died," he says of his mother. "She is not buried. I was there for a while hoping someone could come and help to bury her. But nobody came. So I left."

Taking an offered bowl of cereal, he begins eating, slowly and mechanically.

His own life depends on it.

Over the past month, a long-forewarned famine has struck in southern Sudan, with skeletal children dying in front of helpless aid workers, and with old people begging for a few grains of corn — food that too often is not reaching afflicted areas fast enough.

No one knows how many have died already of hunger because no one is tallying the numbers. But based on information gleaned during a tour of southern Sudan in recent days, certainly hundreds and probably thousands have already died. The World Food Program says that 1.2 million people are in danger of starving — four times the estimate just two months ago — in a famine caused by civil war, drought and displacement. And, on Sunday, Sudan's foreign minister appealed to Arab states and international relief agencies to step up their aid efforts.

In Bahr el Ghazal province, death has become so common that people say they have forgotten how to weep.

"We are dying," a woman from the Dinka tribe says on a footpath in Agaigai.

Her words burn with truth. On the parched patch of ground, about 30,000 people have gathered, camped in the shade of scattered trees, hoping for a share of a U.N. food drop — rations planned for 17,000 people. The airdrops were delayed. There is no food and little water; people are living on leaves, sipping from puddles.

Famine has come on so quickly this year that even one of the world's longest-running relief operations, Operation Lifeline Sudan, has not been able to airlift food fast enough to stave off tragedy.

In late June, the fleet of four C-130 Hercules transport planes that drop food sacks from the sky was grounded for several days at its base in northern Kenya because cracks had appeared on the skins of the heavily worked aircraft.

A random stop at a "tukul," a round reed-and-mud hut, reveals the drawn family of Yokjang Nhomaghot. She has lost two children this month. Her 3-year-old daughter, listless with a swollen stomach, whimpers as flies alight on a huge open sore on the back of her head.

Nhomaghot says she cannot risk a day's walk to take the toddler to the nearest health center. She cannot stop the daily gathering of wild leaves that have been her family's staple for months, and she cannot afford to miss the next food drop.

If she does, the rest of her children could die. It is clear from her demeanor that she has already written off Awut, the 3-year-old. Her hopes focus on two older children, who seem more likely to survive.

"I am not sure I will reach September," Nhomaghot says. That's when whatever food crops have been planted can be harvested. "If it is leaves only (to eat), I am going to die with my children."

When food is limited, weaker members of society are the first to die.

"Women are making incredible choices now. ... They have accepted the death of certain children, certain individuals," says Jason Matus of the World Food Program office in Lokichokio, the base for relief operations in northern Kenya.

"These are not choices," he adds. "These are trying to do the best with almost no choices."

To some extent, that same cold calculus has spread to the aid community.

Relief workers know they have a disaster on their hands. Their activities are now aimed not at saving everyone but at saving as many as possible.

"It's too late. People are dying. We see the situation very pessimistically," says Els Mathieu, the medical coordinator for southern Sudan for the aid organization Doctors Without Borders, which has set up a network of supplemental feeding centers for children younger than 5 who are at less than 75 percent of normal body weight for height.

"At the beginning, I thought if I worked 16 hours a day I could save southern Sudan," Mathieu admits. "Now, I know whether I work 12 hours or 16 hours, it won't change."

None of this is to take away from the often heroic efforts of Operation Lifeline Sudan, the consortium of U.N. and private aid agencies that came into being after the last big famine in 1988-89, when an estimated 250,000 people died.

Despite Operation Lifeline's nine years of work, sophisticated studies of the food economy and in-depth knowledge of the people of southern Sudan, the fighting and drought this year have brought food supplies back down to the critically low levels of 1988.

This has bred frustration. Increasingly, relief officials are saying that they cannot shoulder the burden of southern Sudan by themselves. They demand that efforts to stop Sudan's 15-year civil war move higher up on the world's political agenda.

Rather than pour more millions of dollars every year into feeding southern Sudan, the United States — which has given $45 million in food assistance this year and promises an additional $16 million — should intervene along with other Western powers to put in place a meaningful cease-fire, they say.

The war began in 1983 with a rebellion by militants in the black and mainly non-Muslim south of Sudan, who complained of being discriminated against and exploited by the predominantly Arab and Muslim government in the north.

The rebels, using guerrilla tactics and small arms, have managed to hold large areas of the countryside in the south, carving out a loosely organized quasi-state that some have dubbed "New Sudan" or "New Kush," after an ancient upper Nile civilization.

But they have been unable to control cities or large towns, most of which remain in government hands. So the war drags on into a seemingly interminable series of raids and counter-raids.

If there were roads and free access, Operation Lifeline could feed all the people. But southern Sudan is vast — about 11 times the size of California — and impenetrable, a near-wilderness that swallows vehicles in its swampland. In a land where there are no bridges, Operation Lifeline relies on costly and inefficient airdrops.

By the start of this year, the accumulated damage of years of warfare and insecurity and two consecutive years of drought had already depleted food stores.

The summer rains that are supposed to start at the end of May have been scattered and inconsistent. Farmers in some parts committed seeds to the ground too early, before the rains started in earnest. Others have not yet planted because of lack of seeds or lack of rainfall, or because they are weak or have given up hope.

What makes it all so senseless is that most residents of southern Sudan feel they have no stake in the fighting that has caused the misery.

"They only know that when they hear the Kalashnikov, the people must run away, and they lose everything," reflects Claude Jibidar, the 37-year-old field coordinator for the World Food Program in southern Sudan.

Looking ahead to next year, Jibidar says he does not know how bad things might get. At the very least, donors should be prepared to maintain high food levels through the harvest of 1999.

"In the four years I have been here, I have seen difficult situations," he says. "This is the worst, and it's going to worsen."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

US cool to permanent War Crimes Tribunal

By Charles Trueheart

PARIS—AS diplomats begin to conclude negotiations to establish a permanent international war crimes court, the United States this week offered its sharpest reservations yet about the scope and authority of the court.

Negotiators from 160 nations meeting in Rome are coalescing around a compromise draft agreement that the Clinton administration may not accept, risking isolation from its traditional allies.

"If the court seeks to overreach established customary international law—or to shove aside national judicial principles—or to create a single supranational investigative mechanism," warned David J. Scheffer, the chief US delegate to the five-week conference, "then we will have created an institution with limited membership and dubious credibility."

One European delegate, requesting anonymity, said the restrictions the United States seeks on the independence of the court are tougher than any of those applied to the Nuremberg and Tokyo war crimes tribunals after World War II. He characterized Scheffer's speech last week as a veiled threat to abandon the conference if US demands are not met.



The establishment of a permanent international war crimes court aims to ensure that perpetrators of atrocities (as above) will be brought to justice

The United States laid out its conditions in response to a 'discussion paper' presented by the conference chairman, Philippe Kirsch, of Canada—in effect, a draft of a final treaty that seeks to reach closure on key points of contention before July 17, when the conference ends.

Some of the 250 human rights and international justice organizations at the conference credited the United States with negotiating concessions on several points, including acceptance of the court's authority to investigate war crimes in the context of internal conflicts. They also praised apparent US willingness to compromise on another thorny issue by agreeing to limits on the power of the UN Security Council in blocking or delaying an independent prosecutor's investigations if they clash with UN peacemaking operations.

But the United States is opposed to language that has the support of a large group of influential, mostly Western nations: authorizing the prosecutor, with a pretrial chamber's review, to mount investigations without a specific request from the Security Council or an affected state party.

To the United States and other major powers, such as China and India, such a statute raises the specter of "a human rights ombudsman open to, and responsible for, responding to any and all complaints from any source," said Bill Richardson, the US ambassador to the United Nations, during a visit to Rome. "We are not here to create a court that exists to sit in judgment on national systems."

Human rights and international law organizations pressing for a strong court argue that the Clinton administration and its negotiators are hamstrung by the opposition of Sen. Jesse Helms, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which would review any treaty, and of elements in the US military and intelligence establishments. Helms has said bluntly that he will not support any international court in which it is even theoretically possible that an American citizen might appear.

Diplomats and human rights observers said that at least 60 of the 160 nations attending the conference are inclined to support the emerging compromise language.

During the five-week conference, human rights observers and scholars monitoring the establishment of a permanent criminal court have had to steer between a treaty that accommodates the largest possible number of signatories at the expense of the court's authority and sweep, or one likely to garner fewer immediate signatures but that maintains what proponents view as its integrity.

The United States is in the first group. "We have concluded that this should not be a club court, but a community court," Scheffer said in an interview. "We have to pull back from an idealistic vision of this court on paper. It just won't be effective in practice if it doesn't have a broad membership."

Many large nations that publicly support a court and are trying to bend the treaty toward their positions may not finally sign the treaty, at least in the immediate future. In that group, potentially and for different reasons, are the United States, China, Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Cuba and Sudan—not company the United States wants to keep on a major issue of international law and justice, according to other governments and nongovernmental organizations.

Many European nations are seeking to meet US objections and concerns, judging that an international court neither recognized nor supported by the United States is unlikely to have much stature or effectiveness. But, the European diplomat said, significant concessions to the United States might alienate core support: "To get the Americans on board, we can't throw 60 countries overboard." ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



Bosnian Muslim refugee women from Srebrenica cry as they commemorate the third anniversary of the 1995 massacre when Bosnian Serbs captured the eastern Bosnian town. More than 7,000 Muslim males were presumed killed after Bosnian Serb forces pushed aside lightly-armed Dutch UN peacekeepers and rolled into Srebrenica near the Serbian border.

AFP photo



Members of the Indonesian Red Cross Foundation assist people queing for food during food distribution donated by the people of Singapore organized by the Red Cross Foundation and the international courier service, Federal Express 10 July. Indonesia has been experiencing food shortages due to the current economic crisis.

AFP photo

New military rulers continue regimen of repression

By David Lamb

YANGON, MYANMAR—This country has been brought to its knees by almost four decades of madcap socialism, military abuse and self-imposed isolation. What should be one of the region's most prosperous nations—Myanmar has 80 percent of the world's teak forests, bountiful oil, gems, minerals, natural gas—is the flat-out poorest, a country that has known neither political nor economic development as two generations of generals enriched themselves through drugs and corruption while the Burmese became poorer and more repressed than they ever were under British colonial rule.

Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, has a per capita annual income of $107. Its top universities have been closed for 18 months to defuse student protests. Its jails hold upward of 3,000 political prisoners. Inflation runs 50 percent a year. Fuel is rationed, power blackouts are common. Foreign companies—among them Pepsi-Cola, Apple Computer and Heineken—have fled.

Now, though, there are hints that the generals would like to polish their tarnished image, if not change their policies. Last November, several of the most unpopular generals—who had also amassed personal fortunes—were swept aside in a palace minicoup and placed under house arrest. They were replaced by younger, better educated men who changed the name of the ruling body from the Orwellian-sounding State Law and Order Restoration Council to the State Peace and Development Council.

Led by Khin Nyunt, 58, a previously obscure intelligence general, the council, acting through Burmese companies, hired two Washington public relations firms to recast perceptions of a country that Marco Polo described in the 13th century as having "vast jungles teeming with elephants, unicorn and wild beasts" and in which George Orwell worked in as a British colonial policeman before writing 'Animal Farm.'

The 19-member council opened Myanmar's doors to a trickle of foreign journalists, adopted a more aggressive anti-drug policy resulting in record opium seizures and allowed the opposition, headed by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, 52, to hold a party congress.

At the same time it apprehended nearly 250 intellectuals and accused them of subversive acts and conspiracies, sources in Bangkok, Thailand, say. The military, whose weapons' supplier is China, makes no mention of the 1990 election that it annulled after Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy took 80 percent of the legislative seats.

"As far as I can see, there has been no improvement in human rights," Suu Kyi said in a videotape smuggled out of Yangon, formerly Rangoon.

Because the junta operates in near-total secrecy, Western and Asian diplomats really do not know what to make of the new council. It appears to have no ideology other than political stability and keeping power and no national message except asking the 50 million Burmese for patience and saying it wants foreign investors back.

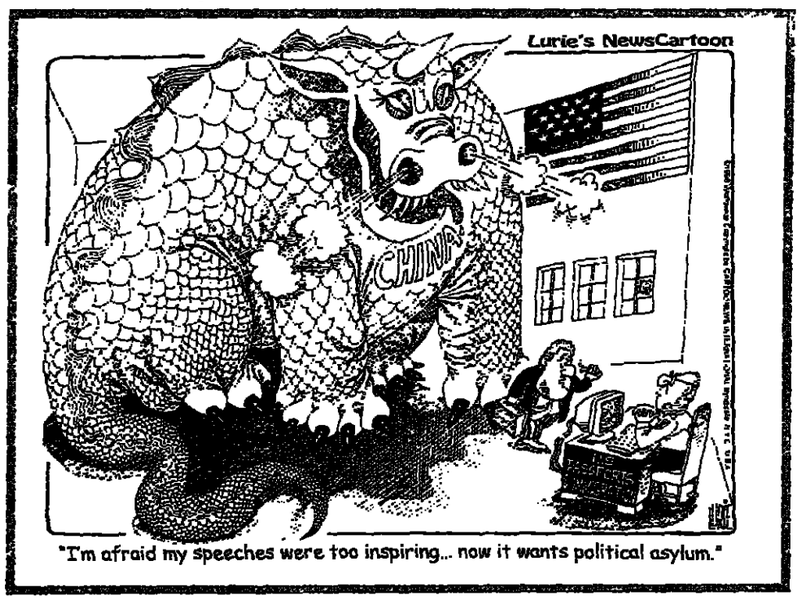
The envoys believe that Ne Win, 87, Burma's supposedly retired strongman, probably was instrumental in the palace shake-up. Ne Win, a general who ended 14 years of democracy in 1962, ruled until stepping down in 1988, after pursuing Stalinist policies that shut this land to the outside and used spies to turn Burmese against Burmese. From August 1989 until September1997, he was not seen in public. Said to be in ill health, Ne Win still relies on astrologers and surrounds himself with soothsayers and wizards.

Gen. Saw Maung, one of Ne Win's successors, gave mystical speeches about Jesus' supposed return to Tibet and retired in 1991 after a nervous breakdown. By then, Burma had changed its name to Myanmar, capitalism had replaced socialism, and a pro-democracy movement had been born, rooted in the deaths of 3,000 protesters at the hands of the army in 1988.

Suu Kyi, whose father, Bogyoke Aung San, led Burma to independence in 1948, became a global celebrity after winning the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1991. She is seen by human-rights groups as a Joan of Arc fighting the evils of a cruel, corrupt regime. She was instrumental in the Clinton administration's decision last year to impose sanctions against Myanmar.

With Suu Kyi's supporters and the generals at a stalemate, and no talks occurring, Myanmar slides ever deeper into despair. The predominantly Buddhist Burmese, who seem to tolerate any misfortune with a smile and have learned that expressing political opinions is unhealthy, muddle on. ■

LA Times-Washington Post



"I'm afraid my speeches were too inspiring... now it wants political asylum."

India kicks off new video promoting nuclear program

By Mark Fineman

NEW DELHI—Nationalists have launched a media campaign to rekindle support for India's nuclear weapons program, as soaring prices, crippling strikes, collapsing public services and political uncertainty have overwhelmed Indians' initial euphoria over the atomic arms tests they conducted in May.

Thundering across airwaves Saturday, a new six-minute music video, "We are Indians" opened to the boom of the five nuclear blasts and the Hindi lyrics: "Every heartbeat is singing, Do not threaten us! Every heartbeat is singing, We are afraid of no one!"

As India's Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee declared in Parliament that he would not give into international pressure to sign a nuclear test-ban treaty, one of his ruling party's top state officials was releasing the video in Bombay as "a tribute to (Vajpayee's) unwavering leadership."

The video, which is to air regularly for weeks on most national stations, stars a soldier who returns to universal celebration in his village after the tests. "We now have tested a new power," the lyrics continue. "Our heads are high, our minds full of courage."

Dr Yusuf Merchant, a Bombay psychiatrist and anti-drug crusader who was asked to produce the video for a ruling party state legislator, insisted it is neither political nor "a war song," but a message of peace. "This is a bomb of peace, but it is also a warning to our enemies," he said in a telephone interview, adding that video's proceeds will help fund his Bombay drug-rehabilitation center. "I have justified the testing of the devices and tried to bond the people of India in the nationalist spirit."

But on the streets of New Delhi, Bombay and other major cities in this impoverished nation of almost 1 billion, most people late last week were gripped not with their government's achievements but its failures. More than 600,000 postal workers, protesting their pay, were on strike for a second day, paralyzing the country's mail system. New Delhi's government hospitals piled up with filth, bloodied bandages and used syringes, as 60,000 janitors and other health-care workers walked off the job over salaries. And thousands endured hours-long power cuts and waited in torrential monsoon rains for bus service disrupted by yet another work stoppage.

In the markets, prices of basics like onions, potatoes, tomatoes and cooking oil continued to spiral "beyond the means of the common man," as one opposition legislator put it in Parliament this week.

Linking the price increases to the nuclear tests and ensuing economic sanctions imposed on India by the United States and other nations, opposition leaders asserted the government's policies were "breaking the backs" of India's poor and middle class.

In recent weeks, many intellectuals also have condemned the pro-nuclear policies of Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, which is ruling via a 14-party coalition that has teetered near collapse several times since the May 11 tests.

All but a handful of the nation's dozens of daily newspapers have editorialized against the weapons program and many middle-class shopkeepers, teachers and even bureaucrats are chiding the government for misplaced priorities.

"The whole thing is disgusting," said the owner of one upscale New Delhi boutique, who asked to be identified only as Ashok. "The postal workers are on strike, the hospitals are becoming cesspools and I'm without electricity half the day. But we've got the Bomb. Hooray. So what?"

Indian social scientist Ashis Nandy said that view is typical of many in India's middle—and lower—classes as they suffer the brunt of the latest round of inflation, recession, labor unrest and utility breakdowns. "After the bomb, there was a tremendous sense of achievement. Maybe four-fifths of the people supported it," said Nandy, who heads New Delhi's Center for the Study of Developing Society. "But that has been declining rapidly."

A recent national survey, whose results were aired on the independent Star-TV network, reported that just 60 percent of those asked supported India's nuclear program. "I'm sure that number has declined even further," Nandy said.

"I think a slight majority still supports it, but Indians have become very skeptical of their political leadership," he added. "A lot of people have begun to look at the tests as a political gimmick that doesn't address any of India's basic problems. Many think the bomb was an attempt to divert attention from rising prices."

Despite the wavering public support, Vajpayee's government remains committed to nuclear weapons as an assertion of India's power and as a deterrent against neighboring China and Pakistan, which responded by testing its own nuclear devices.

The prime minister has appealed to the nation to endure the consequences. "They have imposed bans and sanctions, but we, and especially the younger generation, are prepared to face these challenges," Vajpayee said.

He insisted that India's goal in joining the nuclear club is peace—to eliminate all such weapons in the world by giving India a louder voice in the global debate.

Vajpayee's special envoy Jaswant Singh delivered that message to Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott when they met for more negotiations in Frankfurt, Germany, last week. Neither side commented on the closed-door talks, in which the Clinton administration is seeking to persuade the Indians to sign the test-ban treaty and avert an arms race in South Asia.

But Congress last week undercut somewhat the administration's attempt to keep tough pressures on the Indians by exempting food exports from the sanctions regime, allowing US. farmers, for example, to ship millions of dollars of wheat to India and Pakistan. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

AROUND TOWN



■ *Amman Mayor Dr Mamdouh Al Abbadi opens an exhibition of products made by members of the Union of Jordanian Women at the Amman City Hall. The exhibition includes handicrafts and embroidery.*

Heritage expressed, influences revealed

By Lulu Khasawneh
Special to The Star

Outside, people swelter in the scorching midday heat at Jabal Weibdeh. Nearby, however, the shade and calmness of Darat Ah Funun offers a delightful contrast to the hustle and bustle outside, as upon entering, you are instantly engulfed by the charm of a bygone era.

'Contrast' also sums up the current "Exhibition of contemporary Arab and Jordanian artists", —an extravaganza of various styles and methods used in Arab art today .

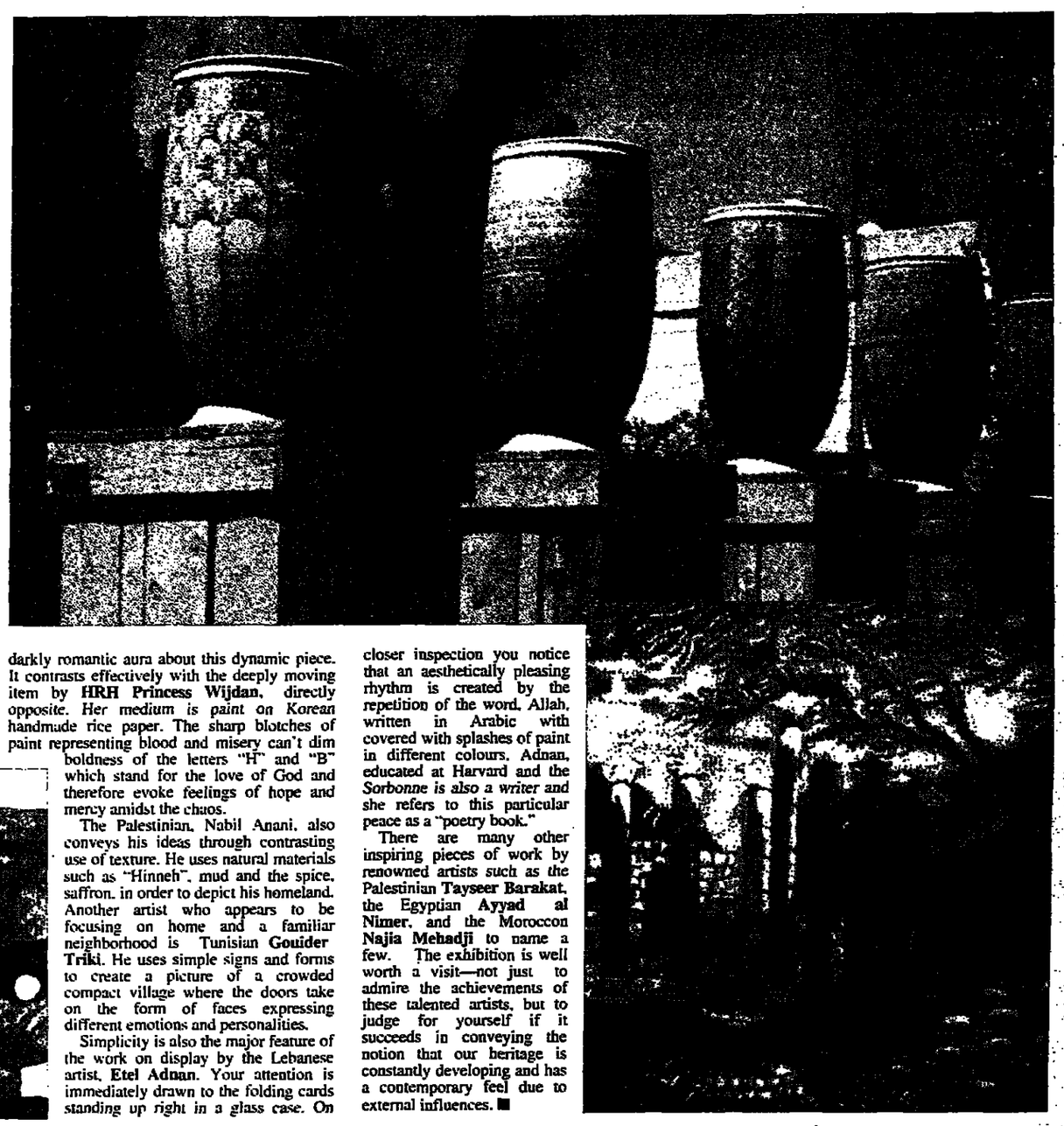
Dr Mazen Asfour, art director at "Darat al Funun", is particularly proud of this exhibition, which he believes reflects the "panorama" of talent in this part of the world. He says it is a vibrant showcase for a characteristic that is prominent in all the works on display. Their work reconciles their own personal heritage with the influences of different artistic schools of thought, allowing them to reveal their unique identities.

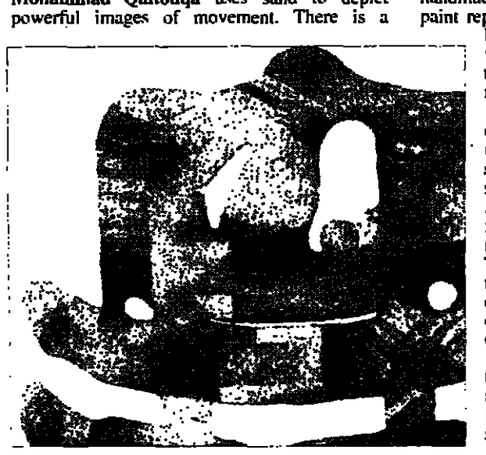
Fouad Mimi's portrait at the entrance sets the mood of this exhibition aptly. The colours are pure Rembrandt but instead of the customary faces, a landscape of trees is illustrated.

This theme of contrasting styles is at its most powerful when you compare **Rashid Koraishi's** work, which greets you as soon as you walk in, to the last display by **Samer Tabbaa**, which is a visual assault .

Koraishi, a prominent Algerian artist, who studied in Paris, shows his interest not only in Arabic script, but in universal signs and symbols, but set in a contemporary fashion. On the other hand, Jordanian Samer Tabbaa's work is composed entirely of aluminum and is ultra modern. Set in rigid symmetry, the coolness is tangible.

'Texture' is the key word when it comes to describing the work of another Jordanian artist. **Mohammad Qaitouqa** uses sand to depict powerful images of movement. There is a darkly romantic aura about this dynamic piece. It contrasts effectively with the deeply moving item by **HRH Princess Wijdan**, directly opposite. Her medium is paint on Korean handmade rice paper. The sharp blotches of paint representing blood and misery can't dim boldness of the letters "H" and "B" which stand for the love of God and therefore evoke feelings of hope and mercy amidst the chaos.





The Palestinian, Nabil Anani, also conveys his ideas through contrasting use of texture. He uses natural materials such as "Hinneh", mud and the spice, saffron, in order to depict his homeland. Another artist who appears to be focusing on home and a familiar neighborhood is Tunisian **Gouider Triki**. He uses simple signs and forms to create a picture of a crowded compact village where the doors take on the form of faces expressing different emotions and personalities.

Simplicity is also the major feature of the work on display by the Lebanese artist, **Etel Adnan**. Your attention is immediately drawn to the folding cards standing up right in a glass case. On closer inspection you notice that an aesthetically pleasing rhythm is created by the repetition of the word, Allah, written in Arabic with covered with splashes of paint in different colours. Adnan, educated at Harvard and the Sorbonne is also a writer and she refers to this particular peace as a "poetry book."

There are many other inspiring pieces of work by renowned artists such as the Palestinian **Tayseer Barakat**, the Egyptian **Ayyad al Nimer**, and the Moroccon **Najia Mehadji** to name a few. The exhibition is well worth a visit—not just to admire the achievements of these talented artists, but to judge for yourself if it succeeds in conveying the notion that our heritage is constantly developing and has a contemporary feel due to external influences. ■

SCRAPBOOK

Steven Spielberg, the Jewish advocate



By Rasheed Al Roussan
Special to The Star

WHENEVER WE mention the word cinema, we can't forget the infinite number of films that Hollywood has produced for the world. The unforgettable **Judy Garland** in The Wizard Of Oz, the immortal **Clark Gable** with his beloved Scarlet (**Vivien Leigh**) in Gone With The Wind, among thousands of artists in this titanic industry which has become a 20th century phenomenon.

Entertainment is the first priority in every Hollywood picture. Seduction plus action were the elements of a successful movie. Today, the word pornography and violence is more suitable for the creation of an American film. Nevertheless, a wave of intellectual directors has emerged producing pictures with highly sophisticated technology which has paved the way for the birth of science fiction movies. Directors like **Stanley Kubrick** who produced the masterpiece 2001: A Space Odyssey and **George Lucas'** Star Wars are considered a revolutionary step into the world of science fiction.

However, the talent of directing such kind of films has become manifested in one director, **Steven Spielberg**, who is now claimed as one of the most famous directors ever born. Films like E.T, JAWS, Indiana Jones, and Jurassic Park have entertained our senses stimulating suspense and horror. He was able to use computer effects to the fullest limits where reality and fiction fused together creating a world of virtual magnificence. Although Spielberg has prevailed in fiction his works aren't completely dedicated for entertaining the public. In films like Schindler's List and Amistad, the other side of Spielberg is shown—the Jewish one.

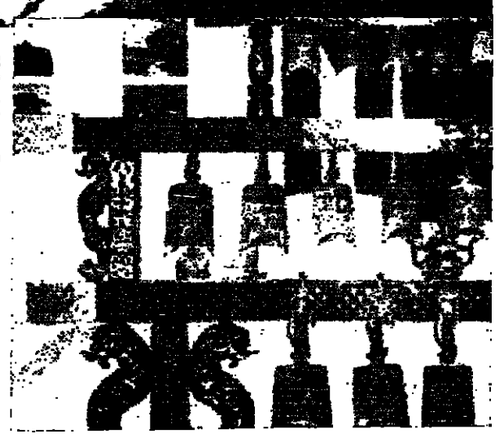
In his film Schindler's List, the director succeeds in showing the world the merciless and pitiful German treatment of the Jews in the holocaust camps. The movie talks about a German businessman who helps Jews escape their fate in the camps. The film is shot in black and white creating a gloomy atmosphere through the whole film. In order to win a worldwide approval of his work, he distributed the movie all around to ethnic communities, especially Afro-Americans. His purpose was to stimulate ethnic groups in order to identify with the Jewish suffering and the discrimination that was practiced by the Germans. The movie depicts Jews as weak, hardworking laborers who strive for their right for a country and a life of their own. As a result, Spielberg is legalizing every action led by Israel in an indirect manner. He isn't merely a director, but he is also a Jewish advocate who, unfortunately, is succeeding in conveying the Jewish community as peaceful human beings.

Amistad, on the other hand, is another historical film which talks about the famous Spanish ship, Amistad, which carried slaves from Africa to Cuba in 1839, it is another intellectual masterpiece by the Jewish director. Slavery is a theme that he carefully manipulates in order to state that Jews are similar to Blacks and that both communities have suffered severe discrimination since the beginning of creation.

The director has recently produced his first animated cartoon film called The Egyptian. In this work, the story of the film goes back to the early existence of humanity where the first godly religion was spread by the prophet Moses. The events take place in Egypt where Moses guides his people to salvation. However, the film shows how the ancient Egyptians enslaved the Jews to build one of the seven wonders of the world, the Pyramids. Spielberg is twisting history for the sake of conveying to the world that the Jews were the real architects behind the establishment of the Pyramids. He will not stop at that point, he will keep fooling our children with his magical lenses manipulating any event he thinks is suitable for the image of the Jews. Hollywood is honored to have such a director, because he is one of his kind, a Jewish advocate who laughs at the jury: the court is his and we are the guilty defendants.■

Splendour of Chinese art





● The mystery of the East is being slowly revealed this week with the opening of the Chinese Art Exhibition at the Amman City Hall. The venue, which was opened by the Chinese Ambassador to Jordan, includes the most impressive of Chinese art and folklore artefacts ever displayed in this country. In addition, there are documents in Sanskrit. The exhibition contains views of famous locations in China like the Golden Palace which was built 5000 years ago. There are photographic collection of datora flowers which grow in mountains in that particular part of the world. The venue continues until 26 July .

Jordanian talent goes to Cairo festival



Al Mashini

AMMAN (Star)—The 4th Cairo Festival for Radio and Television gets under way this week with a thunderous applause. The Jordan Radio and Television Corp (JRTC) is participating with 32 television and radio productions. They are being presented as Jordan's contribution to the world of media.

Director General of the Corporation, **Nasser Joudeh**, says Jordan has always participated in the festival and indeed, in the last two years, its productions have won major awards.

This year 18 television productions as well as 13 radio programs are being judged in the festival. However, one of the strongest contenders is the Abu Awad television series which was shown on television last Ramadan. It stars the famous comedian **Nabeel Al Mashini** and actress **Abir Issa**.

However, Jordan is participating in other film categories, and these are just as likely to be strong.

Daa'erat Al Sumt is a drama that stars **Suhail Illias**, and **Hussein Abu Hamad**, and is written by **Ibrahim Al Abssi**, a local writer, who has many novels to his name. But there are others, like the Arabic television documentary called "Al Hayat Awalan" (Life). Its a film directed by **Feisal Al Zoubi**, about the famous Jordanian writer Yosef Damra.

The idea this year has been to present as many, varied television productions as possible. Hence the Friday morning talk show "Yessid Subahhak" (Morning Greetings), is one of a number of television programs due to be presented to the juries.

The Director of the Radio section at JRTC, **Hashim Khreisat**, says the object is to increase the Jordanian presence in these international festivals, and to show how successful our local material is. He added that this year is rather special for the corporation, as it has entered more programs than any other company.

Nabeel Al Mashini, who has proved himself on the local arena for his diversity, is been chosen as the guest of honor for the festival this year. He has been chosen for his tenacity as an actor, in a career that has spanned for more that 40 years.

Al Mashini says that he is very happy to be chosen as a guest of honor, because he says that this is a success for Jordanian drama. Despite his achievements in the acting field, he modestly feels that there is a long way to go, and his ambitions still remain strong.

He says that today, because of the concept of the open society and the global village, actors can reach a far wider audience.

Last year, Jordan won four major prizes in the festival, and today, optimism remains strong. It is hoped that 1998 will be a breakthrough year, where the Jordanian art scene will take a further leap forward.

The organizers of the festival say this year is special as more Arab countries are participating than ever (Countries participating include Iraq, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Sharqa, Syria, and Morocco). The event that will continue until 20 July.■

Le Meridien, Amman

Revenue 2000 office opens

Mr Peter Cardnell, Le Meridien Managing Director for the Middle East and West Asia, recently opened a Revenue 2000 office at Le Meridien Amman during a regular visit to the city.

The office is connected to Central Reservations Worldwide which will allow the Jordanian Market to make bookings at any Forte/Le Meridien hotel worldwide, free of charge.

The office is managed and operated by highly qualified personnel who have received intensive training in Revenue 2000 management.■

AGENDA

Exhibitions

■ Art exhibition by **Mohammad Abu Zureiq** continues until 19 July at Rowaq Al Hussn near Irbid.

■ "The small pictures exhibition" is taking place at the **Orpholy Gallery** at Um Utheina. It ends on 25 July .

■ The **Jerash Festival for Arts and Culture** starts on 22 July. Its ends on 8 August.

■ An exhibition of **Chinese art** continues at the City Hall in Ras Alain till 26 July.

■ Paintings of 18 artists from Egypt, Syria, Iraq Palestine and Lebanon in **Al Mashriq gallery**, Shimisani, continues until 1 November

■ A Sports and Culture Exhibition at the **French Culture Center** in Jabal Luweibdeh continues until 30 July .

Films

■ Honey, We Shrunk Ourselves, at the **American Center** on 17 July at 5 pm.

■ Also at the American Center is **Peter Pan**, the famous cartoon film by Disney. It will be shown on 24 July at 5 pm.

The Star
Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly
OnLine
http://star.arabia.com

The Star's Guide TV

Programs on JTV from 11 — 17 July

ENGLISH PROGRAMS

SATURDAY
3:00—Holy Koran
3:10—Family Dog (Cartoon)
3:30—I Wanna Be...
4:00—Neighbors
4:30—Ocean Wilds (Doc.)
5:00—French Prog. (Doc.)
6:00—Acapulco Bay
7:00—News in French
7:15—French Prog.
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—You Bet Your Life
8:00—Prism (Talk Show)
8:30—Sirens (Police Drama)
9:30—News At Ten
10:00— World Cup
11:45—Feature Film

SUNDAY
3:00—Holy Koran
3:10—Pumpkin Patch
3:20—The Pink Panther
3:30—The Adventure of the Black Stallion
4:00—The American Chart Show (Music)
5:00—Super Star Sport(Doc.)
6:00—French Prog.
7:00—News in French
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Life's most Embarrassing Moments
8:00—Football Summary
8:30—Challenges (Talk Show)
9:10—Renegade (Drama)
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Correll
12.00—The History of Rock 'n' Roll

MONDAY
3:00—Holy Koran
3:10—Highlander (Cartoon)
3:30—The Worst Day of My Life (Drama)
4:00—Neighbors (Drama)
4:30—Last Frontiers (Doc.)
5:00—French Prog.
6:00—Acapulco Bay
7:00—News in French
7:15—French Prog.
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Hope and Gloria
8:00—War Lords (Doc.)
9:10—Good Guys, Bad Guys
10:00—News At Ten
10:30—Law & Order
11:10—Bay Watch Nights

TUESDAY
3:00—Holy Koran
3:10—Pro Stars
3:30—Small Talk
4:00—Border Town (Drama)
4:30—Baby It's You
5:00—The Route of Capricorn
6:00—French Program
7:00—News in French
7:15—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Step by Step
8:00—What would you do?
8:30—The Sculptress
10:00—News in English
11:45—Feature Film

WEDNESDAY
3:00—Holy Koran
3:10—Mr Bogus Show
3:30—Castle of Adventures
4:00—The Album Show
5:00—Ushuaia (French Doc.)
6:15—Acapulco Bay
7:00—News in French
7:15—French Programs
7:30—Buddies (Comedy)
8:00—Envoye Special
8:30—Kung-Fu
10:00—News in English
11:45—The Seekers

THURSDAY
3:00—Holy Koran
3:10—Dinky Dis (Cartoon)
3:30—The Animal Park
4:00—French Doc.
4:30—Blue Water Dreaming
5:00—NBA Games
6:15—Sliders (Luck of the draw)
7:00—News in French
7:15—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Family Matters
8:00—Football Summary
8:30—Dr Quinn Medicine Woman
9:10—Oprah Winfrey
10:00—News At Ten
10:30—Feature Film

FRIDAY
3:00—Holy Koran
3:10—Teddy Ruxpin
3:30—Wishbone
4:00—Feature Film
6:15—De Fort Boyard
7:00—News in French
7:15—French Program
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—The Fresh Prince of Bel Air
8:00—The Footsteps of Alexander the Great
8:30—The Brain
9:10—Babylon 5
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—The Seekers



NBA Games, Thursday at 5:00n pm.

PROGRAMMES EN FRAN AIS

SAMEDI
17:00—Faut pas rêver
19:00—Le journal
19:15—Magazine L'œuf de Colomb

DIMANCHE
18:00—Bonne espérance
19:00—Le Journal
19:15—E=M6

LUNDI
17:00—Thalassâ
19:00—Le Journal
19:15—Cinq sur Cinq

MARDI
18:00—Les cœurs brûlés (10)
19:00—Le Journal
19:15—Fractales

MERCREDI
17:00—Ushuaïa
19:00—Le Journal
19:15—E=M6
20:00—Envoyé spécial

JEUDI
16:00—L'école des fans
19:00—Le Journal
19:15—Atomes crochus

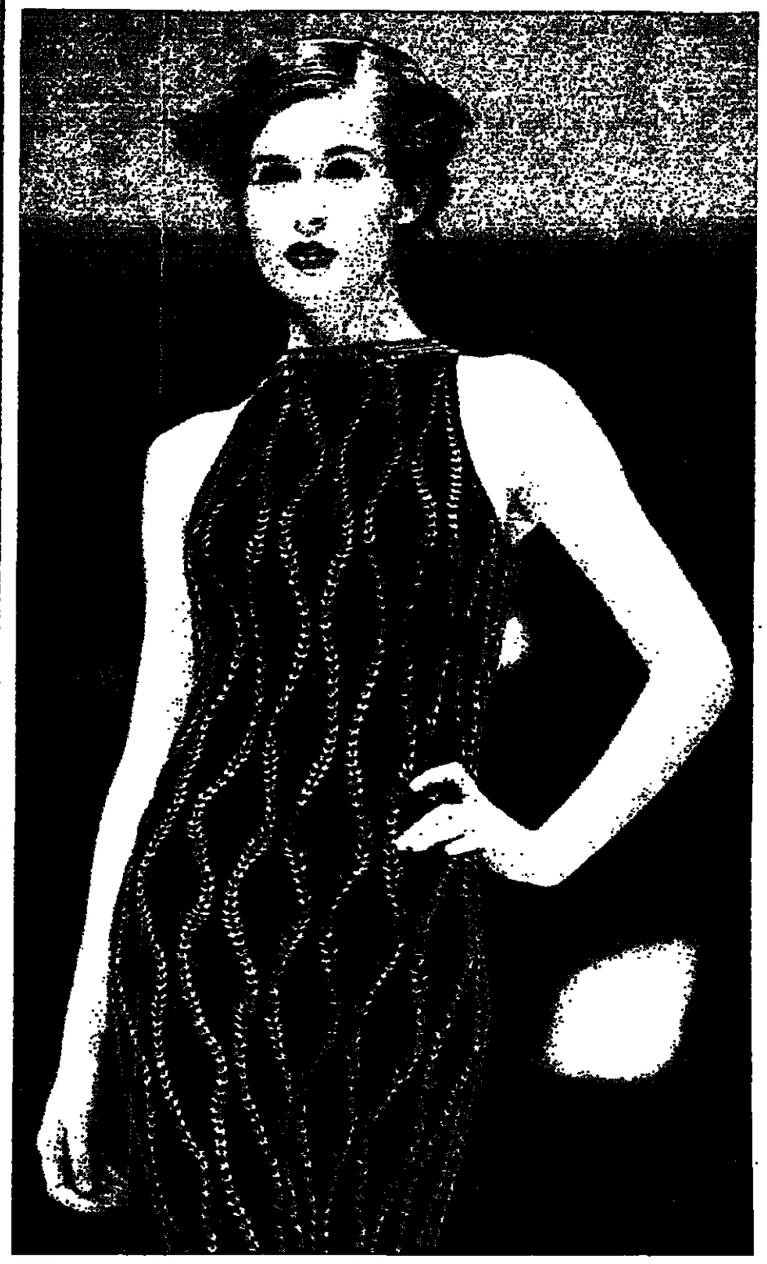
VENDREDI
17:30—Fort Boyard
19:00—Le Journal
19:15—Allô la Terre

Programs are subject to change by JTV

Amman cinemas

- Philadelphia I (Tel: 4634149): That Old Filling
- Philadelphia II (Tel:4634149): In Love 7 War
- Galleria I (Tel: 079 33430): *As Good As It Gets*
- Galleria II (Tel: 079 33430): *Air Bud*
- Plaza (Tel: 5699238): Titanic
- Concord I (Tel: 5677420): Vegas Vacation
- Concord II (Tel: 5677420): Cospiracy Theory

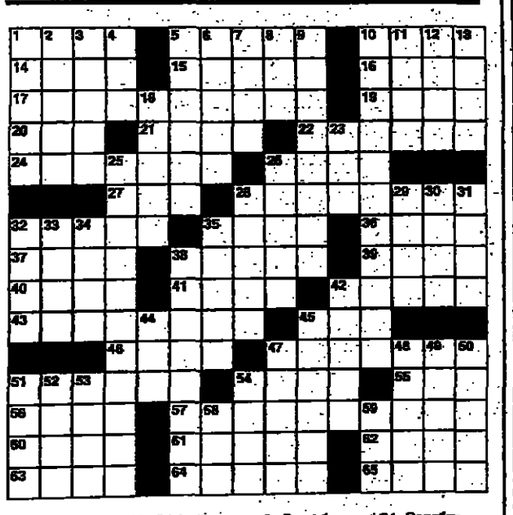
Fashion



CHINA—A model shows evening wear by the Yee Tak Industrial Co. at the Hong Kong Collections Show on the opening day of Hong Kong Fashion Week 14 July. Designers and manufacturers are counting on the show to help boost trade for the territory's garment industry which is suffering from the effects of the Asian economic crisis.

AFP photo

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

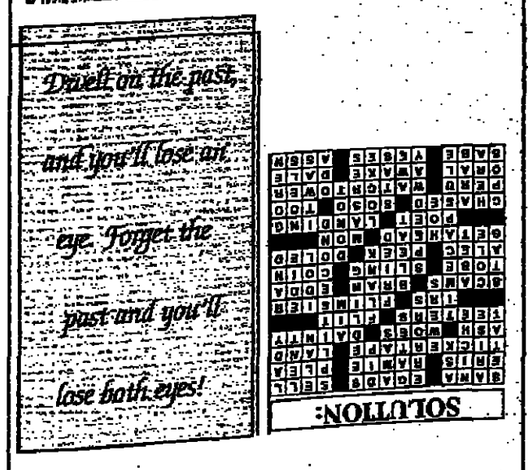


ACROSS
1 Yemen's capital
5 Oaths of old
10 Promote successfully
14 Goddess of discord
15 Cordage fiber
16 Kind of bargain
17 Parade confetti, at times
19 Disembark
20 Volcanic fallout
21 Trials
22 Exquisitely fragile
24 Wobbles
26 Move rapidly and nimbly
27 1040 supplier
28 More insubsantial
32 Confidence games
35 Fiber source
36 Icelandic literary work
37 Soliloquy start
38 Biblical weapon
39 Fountain throwaway
40 Tangy fish sauce
41 Steal a look
42 Dispensed as charity
43 Take the lead
45 Weekday abbr.
46 Versifier
47 Debarkation
51 Pursued
54 No great shakes
55 Overly
56 Lima land
57 Guard's post
60 Spoken
61 Wide-eyed
62 Gladia
63 "Kemo _" (Tonto)
64 Affirmatives
65 Part of P.T.A.: abbr.

DOWN
1 _ ease (make comfortable)
2 Greet the day
3 Cubbyhole
4 Request
5 Oversights
6 _ Revolutionary general
7 Amo, _, amat
8 Party nosh
9 Young plant
10 Instant
11 Spirit
12 40-day period
13 Baronet's spouse
18 Pitchers
23 Ready follower
25 Cornerstone content
26 Steak cut
28 Like onion rings
29 Adored one
30 Adams or McClung
31 Author Ayn
32 Men-only affair
33 Singer Natalie
34 Sanction misdeeds
35 Sheepish comment
38 Indianapolis, e.g.
42 _ pass go
44 Weed remover
45 Converts into pulp
47 Actress Sondra _
48 " _ Just one of those things"
49 Coward and Harrison
50 Late bridge maven
51 Navel noncoms: abbr.
52 Wife of Zeus
53 Hebron native
54 R.R. terminals
58 Fill with wonder
59 Harem room

OFF THE WALL

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—This Week's— HOROSCOPES

By Linda Black

Weekly Tip: The sun is in Cancer making home and family the main theme. Cancer is also very good at business, because they play to win.

Aris (March 21-April 19)—Although you'd like to travel, it looks like you're anchored to home. Concentrate on what's happening there so you don't make a mistake you'll have to fix later..

Taurus (April 20-May 20).—You'd lucky but the workload is intense. Save your playtime for later. You might find a way to have fun and make a profit simultaneously.

Gemini (May 21-June 21).—An argument could start out as fun but end up as stressful. Just keep communicating and you can get everything worked out.

Cancer (June 22-July 22)—Your workload is intense. You're learning a great deal by doing, instead of reading about it. Partnership is your theme.

Leo (July 23-Aug... 22). Love is your theme and you're in luck. There will be a couple of surprises, but it looks like they're good ones. Meanwhile, you're under pressure to get something finished.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22).—There are *big changes under way at your house* so pay attention. Make sure your interests are protected. Do work involving computers of machinery. The moon in Aquarius helps you with technical matters..

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23)—You're sharp as a tack and that's good. An older person is continually pressing you to put up or shut up. If you think about what you're saying, you're more liable to achieve the goal.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You could go through a lot of money if you're not careful. Well, *you could actually do it* on purpose, too. Your intuition is pretty good right now, so you might make some excellent deals.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). There's all sorts of surprises and you're creating most of them. Don't throw your money around, or the last laugh will be on you. You may have to fight to hold on to it.

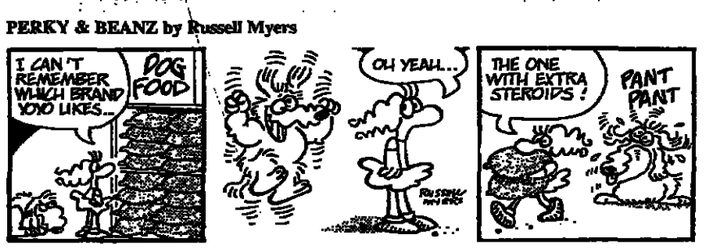
Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Partnership is your theme, so put that concept into practice. A job that comes to you can be shared with another. Your chance are better of completing the assignment if you ask for help.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)—Your workload is very demanding and that's a hassle. You'd much rather be playing with friends. A committee meeting goes well, but don't let it go into overtime or there could be problems.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)—You're lucky in love Remember that, if conditions get tense. An older person wants you to do something impossible. It's either your boss or one of your parents.

If You're Having a Birthday This Week: Your work is the major item on your agenda this year. There will be lots of surprises and changes.

PERKY & BEANZ by Russell Myers



ELWOOD by Ben Templeton & Tom Forman



CATFISH by Fred Wagner & Tom Cone



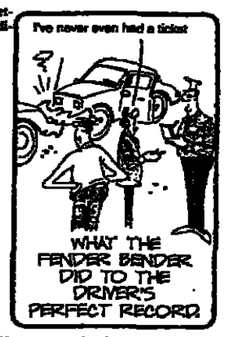
"... How're ya' doin' on the gentleman's car, Mhrook?"

© 1998, Tribune Media Services

Jumble

Unscramble these four words, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

RUHTT
LIXEE
DIMPOU
UNTEAB



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: _ _ _ A _ _ _ _ IN _ _

Answers: What the fender bender did to the driver's perfect record - PUT A DENT IN IT

Answers: TRUTH EXILE PODIUM BUTANE

Would You Believe...

* The gestation period for chimps is almost as long as for humans. Chimps are pregnant for about eight months.
* The practice of divining the future from a crystal ball is officially known as "screeology."
* Some artists have rituals they believe are necessary to complete their work. The novelist Marcel Proust preferred to write in bed.
* The English Channel is 150 miles wide at its widest point.
* Babe Ruth hit his final Major League home run in 1935.
* India ranks first in reported cases of leprosy. Brazil comes in second.
* The largest animal known to have existed is the blue whale.

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The role of television in military conflicts

By Joe Rogaly

WANT TO start a war? Better yet, want the US, Britain, France, Nato, the United Nations on your side? Call in the cameras. There may be tough times ahead, blood will be spilled, but the odds will be in your favour.

Television is the most powerful of all the weapons in the arsenals at the most fearsome trouble-spots on the face of the globe. The way the messenger of images does its work is complicated, devoid of past certainties.

During the 1939-45 conflagration, newspapers, radio and film were treated as instruments of propaganda, designed to raise the morale of the troops and keep civilians in good spirit.

Until 1989, when the cold war ended, the worst fears of both the communist world and its opponents in the west were reported, and sometimes magnified, by the print and electronic media. This helped swell arms budgets and bolstered the military-industrial complex.

Today, the definition of a hot spot is one that catches the TV eye. When Douglas Hurd was British foreign secretary (1989-95) he would point to the many conflicts that remained free of outside intervention. He would contrast this with the war in former Yugoslavia, which had unsettled viewers. At first sight we might say that there is no mystery about the reason for this. It lies in those magic initials CNN, NBC, BBC—yet polls taken in the US suggest that there is a gap between the internationalist elite, which at least acknowledges Washington's responsibilities as the sole superpower, and the average American voter, whose concerns are primarily domestic.

This is where TV can make an impact. For some years Europe dithered over Bosnia. Even in naturally belligerent Britain the debate over whether to use military force went



unresolved. Eventually the small screen did its work. The US muscled its way in.

Serbia was bombed into submission. It had to be attacked from the air because the armchair audience back home might have been offended by the sight of their own troops blood. This is particularly true of American viewers, still haunted by the ghosts of Vietnam. We learned that much in the campaign to expel Iraq from Kuwait, the first Gameboy war.

Britain's new Labour government understands these realities. Its populist prime minister races to be ahead of the war correspondents' cameras, whether they are deployed in Kosovo or the Gulf. He expresses the deepest instincts of conservative and patriotic middlebrows. So does George Robertson. The defence secretary was disarmingly frank this week. Speaking on the eve of publication of his comprehensive strategic review, he said that he believed the British people did not want to be spectators in the world. "They want to be participants," he continued. "If they see mass murder or genocide or horrible things going on, they expect their government to be able to do something about it."

To this end, the three services—army, navy and air force—will work together in the Joint Rapid Reaction Force which in Mr Robertson's words, will be "the spearhead of Britain's modernised, rapidly deployable and better supported front line." You can hear the strains of Rule Britannia in the background.

The truth is that in most conceivable instances of "horrible things going on" Britain is highly unlikely to act on its own. It might participate in Nato or UN or, possibly, future European Union joint actions.

Just winning the flickering attention of the British TV audience will not suffice. If it did we might see intervention in the dreadful civil war in the Sudan, or the tragic border dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Success in future military expeditions will in any case depend on the active participation of the US. You could characterise Britain's entire defence strategy as a state of readiness to act as chief spear-carrier to Uncle Sam, ever ready to send in helicopters in conjunction with the US Air Force.

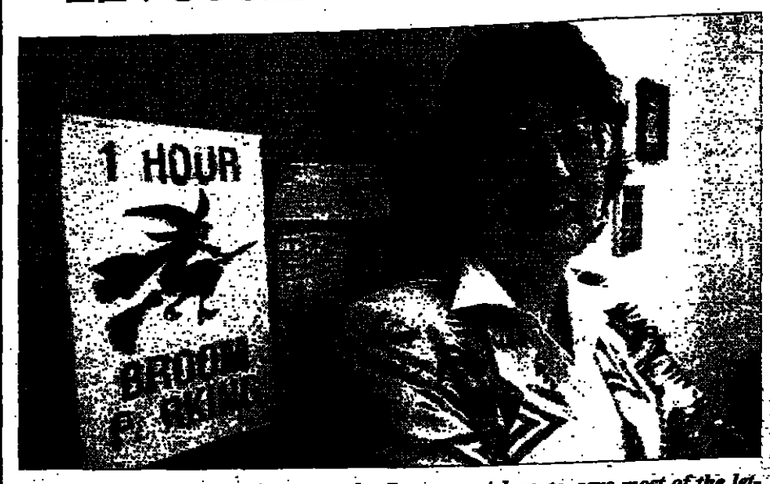
This is not an ignoble role. We could argue that force should be deployed only when there is a direct threat to the national interest, and not merely when governments perceive a popular demand that something be done. This is a respectable, indeed conventional, point of view.

It falls down because it is out of date. It ignores the power of public opinion in post-cold war democracies. We are stuck with Commander TV, at least when it comes to local conflicts. Sometimes the public is right.

If that be so, and if it be true that US involvement is necessary for success, it is just as well that the world's superpower, the mightiest force in history, is temperamentally disinclined to act unilaterally. Its experience in Somalia was searing. We may assume that nowadays, Washington prefers to move in alliance with others. If the UN or Nato approves, so much the better. This is where British military preparedness is useful. As an adjunct to the US it can stiffen resolve; in cases calling for 'Rapid Reaction' (TV-led), the White House knows Downing Street will always take its calls.■

Financial Times Syndication

Got a gripe? Turn to Kvetchers-for-Hire



Travel agent Joan Porte, known as the Consumer Advocate, says most of the letters she has written have been to airlines. Photo by Larry Morris.

By Beth Berselli

THE LIST of modern-day frustrations seems to continually grow longer: the airline that lost—and never found—your luggage, the landlord who kept your security deposit without cause, the clerk who was unbelievably slow and rude.

Though these are the kinds of problems for which many consumers want to seek redress, most people don't have the time and energy. What to do?

For a fee, you can find someone to whine on your behalf. With names like Rent-a-Kvetch and Ellen's Poison Pen, a cottage industry of professional complainers has sprung up over the public's increasing frustration with bad service and few easy avenues for complaining.

"People are tired of being stepped on," said Ellen Phillips, by day a middle-school teacher in Alexandria, Va., by night the proprietor of Ellen's Poison Pen. "They're resentful that the good old days when companies cared seem to be gone."

In the past year and a half, Phillips said she has written nearly 2,000 letters on behalf of wronged consumers and generally, with persistence and creativity, has gotten good results.

B.L. Ochman, a New York woman, exemplifies this new breed of complainers-for-hire. Her aptly named company Rent-a-Kvetch, which uses the Yiddish word for a chronic complainer, is "dedicated to artful legitimate complaining." For $50 a letter she'll nag, needle, deprecate and denounce those louses who dared to treat someone in such a shoddy manner.

Joan Porte, a travel agent who moonlights as, simply, the Consumer Advocate, finds her expertise in the industry helpful when dealing with customers' displeasure with treatment by airlines, an area that creates a lot of work for complaint specialists.

> *"Businesses have decided once and for all that customers, once they have paid, they're the enemy."*
>
> *Richard Hill, consumer, Florida*

In one recent letter to an airline Porte wrote, "We are seeking an explanation of and compensation for the lack of service received at the hands of an incompetent and rude agent in New York's La Guardia Airport." The agent, she said, was "belligerent, domineering and completely unconcerned about (my client's) welfare. This man is not a wanted fugitive! He is a platinum flyer of your airline!" The complaint is pending.

Experts say what has spawned this industry is a service sector that is booming, as time-crunched Americans seek out help in more areas of life. These days you can hire professionals to shop for groceries, walk a dog or buy a car. You can pay people to find a play group for your toddler or arrange your family photographs into an album. And inevitably, as you pay more people to do more for you, you'll have more complaints. So why not hire someone to do your bellyaching for you?

That's what Norman Kozlarek did. The busy Illinois businessman last year bought a $3,000 television from Toshiba. First, the company's deliverymen brought the wrong TV set. They corrected that mistake, but left the wrong remote control.

For months Kozlarek tried to get the correct remote, he said, making repeated phone calls to his local Toshiba dealer. Finally he turned to Ochman, the New York kvetcher. His reason for hiring a professional: "I have enough other things to worry about," he said. Ochman quickly fired off letters to the president of Toshiba's American division, as well as to the company's head in Japan. It's pointless to deal with anyone else, she said. Nor does it make sense to call the company because "on the phone the other person has the ultimate weapon—they can hang up on you," Ochman said.

Her letter was polite, but firm. "In your exalted position," she wrote the Toshiba bosses, "I am sure it is easy for you to see that devotion to excellent customer service is—above all else—the most important tenet of modern business. Well, sir, Toshiba has failed miserably in this instance."

She continues, "I am sure you will be mortified to hear that this situation had to escalate to the point where Mr. Kozlarek had to hire me to plead on his behalf for the right remote. I trust in your honor that you will rectify the situation."

As a kicker to her letter Ochman threatened to notify authorities, including the state attorney general, if prompt action was not taken. The tactics worked. Within days, Kozlarek received not one but two remote controls. "They actually paid attention to what she was saying," said Kozlarek, who has since retained Ochman to help him get a refund for a flawed diamond he recently bought.

Ochman, who began professional kvetching in 1981, said the secret of her success is simply trying to "appeal to people's better nature. ... I tell the CEO or the president, 'Don't you feel sorry for this schmook?' "

She charges $50 for an initial phone consultation and then $50 a letter, plus 10 percent on any settlement exceeding $150.

No one really knows how many people make a living, or supplement it, through professional complaining, but the complainers said they know of hundreds of people who have long griped for free on behalf of their friends and family. Now, some are starting to charge for their services. Gary and Sandy Rattigan are former amateur naggers turned pro. Last October the couple from Somerville, Mass., started a company, Complain to Us. They wanted to start a business out of their home and settled on the complaining niche because Sandy, a hospital billing and collections manager, already was an expert in this area.

Over the past nine months, the Rattigans said, they have handled about 200 complaints. They claim a success rate of 65 percent—not too shabby because many of their clients already had harassed every customer-service representative at the offending company.

One satisfied customer is Richard Hill, 27, of Florida, who was hit with a $300 cancellation fee last winter upon changing the name on his cellular-phone account. For four months he tried in vain to get the cell-phone company to refund his money.

Hill then contacted Complain to Us and after a week's worth of faxes, letters and phone calls his money was returned.

"I'd exhausted all my other options," said Hill, who had appealed to a local consumer organization to no avail. "It's nice to find a service that helps the little guy out."

Hill was so pleased he sought out the Rattigans' help a few months later; the couple successfully coaxed his car insurance company into paying a $500 claim.

Like many others in the business, the Rattigans advertise their services on the World Wide Web (www.complaintous.com). They charge $50 an hour, an increase from $25 an hour when they started. The couple said most complaints take an hour to resolve. They earn a 30 percent commission on refunds exceeding $300.

While they don't guarantee a resolution to a customer's problem, they promise to complain to every appropriate person or they'll return the customer's fee. A good portion of their phone time is spent on hold, said Gary Rattigan, 41, a painter in his spare time.

"Businesses have decided once and for all that customers, once they have paid, they're the enemy," he said.

As evidence he and other complaint specialists cite studies such as the American Customer Satisfaction Index, conducted annually by the University of Michigan. The index last year was 71.1, with 100 being the highest possible score, down from 74.5 in 1994, the first year customer satisfaction was tracked.

Yet not all experts think poor customer service is behind consumer complaints. Rather, what's happened, said John Goodman, who runs TARP Inc., an Arlington, Va., research and consulting firm on consumer behavior, is that products have become more complex and are more likely to cause problems for customers.

"People don't want to read the directions," Goodman said. He said a study by his firm, for example, showed that 30 percent of people who bought a cordless phone and couldn't get it to work simply threw it away rather than read the instruction manual or ask the company for help.

Whatever the nature of the complaints, business has become quite profitable for the more intrepid complaint-busters. Phillips last year signed a book deal with Random House Inc. Her book, "Shocked, Appalled and Dismayed! How to Write Letters of Complaint That Get Results," is expected to be published in January and sell for $12 a copy. She wouldn't say what she received in royalties.

Among the complaints Phillips says she has handled are getting the maker of a famous brand of ice cream to pay the medical bills for a man who was rushed to the hospital after a nutshell from the ice cream became lodged in his throat. She also persuaded a city in Texas to split a girls' softball league championship after her client complained that his daughter's team lost the game because of a biased referee. She even took on the U.S. Postal Service—and won, she said.

Phillips, 51, plans to retire from teaching next year, but will stay in the letter-writing business, which she said is doing well. She charges $15 per 100 words, plus $40 for each hour of preperation time.

Porte said she gets most of her clients through her agency. As a result, most of the 70 letters she has penned have been to airlines.

"I like being a pain to big companies," she said. "Nothing irritates me more than the arrogant person who forgets that the folks who are buying your products are keeping you in business."■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Journey around the Aegean in a wooden schooner

By Christian Tyler

THE PART of Dionysos (a paunchy but still handsome man-about- town) was allotted to the most garrulous member of the ship's company, that of the slave Xanthias to his pretty wife. Heracles was played by an expert in ancient Cycladean architecture, the corpse by the managing director of the tour organisers, and Charon, the boatman of the underworld, by a travel agent from Tunbridge Wells.

The other six passengers were frogs. They sat on the crumbling white marble of a Greek theatre at ancient Caunus in Turkey's south-west corner, croaking out the chorus: Breke-ke-kex, ko-ax, ko-ax.

At school we never believed Aristophanes' frogs really sounded like that, just as we never believed in Turner's sunsets. But as the impromptu scene ended and the party split up to explore the ruins, there came a strange echo from the lake below. It sounded like pheasants clucking and ducks quacking. As we approached closer, the noise became clearer: bleating goats being pursued by yapping dogs. Breke-ke-kex, ko-ax, ko-ax. It was the frogs' chorus—just as Aristophanes described it.

There were egrets on the lake and black-and-gold reed birds. Cattle grazed among the ruins, a tortoise clambered from under a temple base and two Turkish women with Asiatic faces ambled through a broken colonnade. The scene might have come from the sketchbook of David Roberts or Edward Lear.

We had come to this mysterious malarial place by sea, crossing a sandbar in a shallow-draught boat and nosing three kilometres through reed beds up the river Dalyan, overlooked by tombs carved in the rock to mimic temples.

As we returned that evening to the ship, an 80-ft wooden schooner, or gulet, the setting sun was throwing crimson streaks across the Aegean. "Perhaps," said the classics teacher from London who was our guide, "that's what Homer meant by oinopa ponton, the 'wine-dark sea.'"

Bouncing over the waves to a cove where the Arif Kaptan B was anchored, and looking forward to a stiff drink and the grilled fish which had been caught by Hassan, the captain, the night before, it became obvious that this is the best way to do classical sites.

The coast of south-west Turkey, ancient Caria, is a harsh, inaccessible place: and unless you know a great deal about the late classical and Hellenistic periods its relics can look like just so much rubble, one stone piled on another. Confronted in the heat of the day, at the height of summer, ruins can ruin a holiday. Creep up on them stealthily from the sea, however, catch them out of hours and at the right season, keep a knowledgeable enthusiast beside you, and you have the perfect synthesis of history and the picturesque.

There was not much left standing at Lydae, a lonely valley covered in poppies where the silence was broken only by goat bells. On the far slope stood a white croft with smoke drifting from its chimney. A woman wearing a white wimple and brown dress over Turkish pantaloons came to the door, spinning wool with one hand and chivvying her livestock with the other. It was a scene from the Dark Ages. Yet this city once boasted its own Roman senator.

In Rhodes, there appeared to be nothing at all. Goats of many colours munched along the promontory above a broken shack with a dejected Coca-Cola sign lying outside. But a short scramble up the hill, spiky with spring green, revealed the remains of a fortress whose worn ashlar blocks looked like so many plump, putty-coloured cushions.

There was a race to find an inscription to Zeus Artabyrios mentioned by George Bean, a leading archaeological authority on Asia Minor. The closest the party got was three words scratched on a rock outside the south gate: hieros ho topos, "this is a holy place."

We sailed (motored, to be precise, since gulet sails are rarely hoisted) round the lower jaw of the peninsula and dropped into port. Here I visited the Demon Barber of Bozburun who wields the fastest scissors in the Med. Working from temporary premises opposite the marbled emporium he is having built across the street, he was attentively watched by his apprentice, his elder son. His wife joined the fun and finally the younger son, too, dangling a large fish. For L2m (about £5) I had the best shave and haircut; better than anything you'll find in Jermyn Street.

Two dolphins broke the surface as the vessel drove through Greek waters past the island of Symi with its tapestry of neoclassical villas. Knidos, where we anchored, is an enormous site, strewn with fallen columns and intricately carved fragments. Diaphanous swallow-tailed dragonflies nosed among the spring flowers and giant dandelion clocks. Sadly, the main attraction of Knidos is missing, presumed lost in a fire at Byzantium. The naked statue of Aphrodite by Praxiteles used to draw visitors from all over the ancient world: copies in the British Museum and Vatican give some idea of her voluptuous beauty. The base of her presumed temple, built in the round to show off her curves, was excavated in the late 1960s.

If cruising in a sleek wooden schooner is the best way of enjoying old ruins, then learning ancient history is the perfect excuse for lazing about on a boat in the sun. But unless you get up a party yourself (in which case you may be provided with your own regius professor of Greek) there is no knowing who your shipmates will be, nor who will be listening to your intimate moments through the cabin wall.

You could be lucky and get the dancing Lithuanian who fell in love with one of the crew, or the American who insisted on being brought champagne while she swam, or the Englishman who inconveniently (but no doubt happily) expired on board and had to be sent home in a Turkish carpet. Whatever the mixture, it has every chance of being peaceably homogenised by the shared experience of good food, fresh air, visual delights and living history.

Bodrum was the last port of call. The coast here is littered with holiday villages about as sensitively executed as Israeli settlements on the West Bank of Jordan. Inhaling diesel fumes, the keener members of the party dodged through traffic to visit the Great Hole of Halicarnassus, where the Persian satrap Mausolus erected his megalomaniac tomb in the 4th century BC. But in vain. The spell was broken.■

Financial Times Syndication

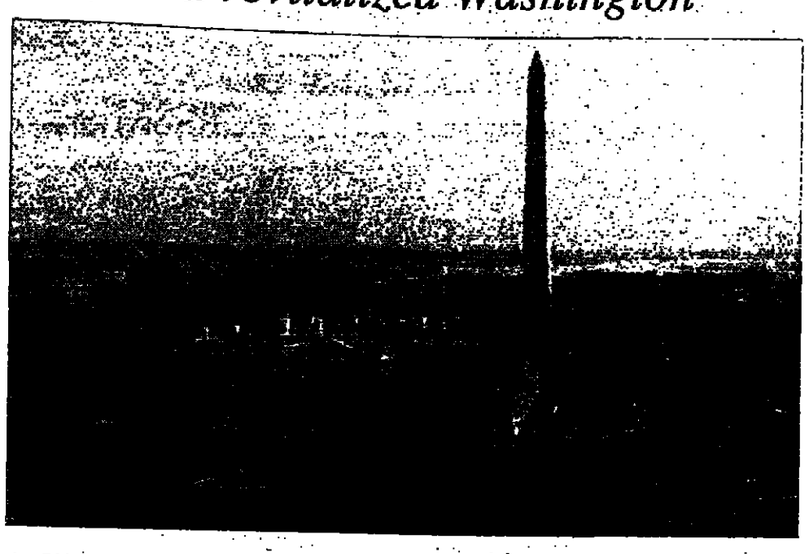


More than 120 young people from 12 countries and territoris around the world, including 30 from China, pose for photographs on the Great Wall 11 July for the launch of a unique international expendition into China (The Inchcape Initiative). The expedition, the first of its kind ever to be undertaken in China, will enable young people to work on a number of important community and environmental projects in remote rural areas.

AFP photo

Washington revitalized

No gratuitous parking tickets, goodbye Marion Barry. Jurek Martin on a revitalized Washington



A RISING economic tide might lift most boats but Washington DC long seemed irrevocably holed beneath the waterline. For all its great galleries and impressive public buildings, the nation's capital was saddled with the worst mayor, an incompetent and unresponsive local bureaucracy, commuter traffic congestion second only to Los Angeles, appalling inner city blight, crime and terrible schools. Welcome to the third world, long-suffering locals told their visitors.

We did not even have the relief of professional sports. Baseball left town in 1970 for Texas, football moved last season to the suburbs, which also housed the basketball and ice hockey teams famous only for their futility.

Some local busybodies even wanted to close down Rock Creek public golf course, one of the few places in this de facto segregated city where blacks and whites mingle without fear or animus (though anybody who partners me cannot be afraid of losing).

I don't want to put the hex on it, but there is evidence things are changing for the better. For example, Marion Barry, presumed to be our mayor-for-life, announced he would not seek re-election, declaring his 16-year tenure, interrupted by a conviction for cocaine abuse, to be entirely victorious. A relieved citizenry was not much inclined to dispute this.

But it was celebration of a different sort on a spanking new downtown hockey rink that is the latest symbol of Washington feeling better about itself. The local Capitals last month found themselves playing in the Stanley Cup finals for the first time. Ice hockey might not seem indigenous to a city so hot and humid in summer it was once rated a diplomatic hardship post, and it is true the team, stuffed with imported Canadians andEuropeans, lost. But no matter; they were our Capitals.

The new mood is evident at more mundane levels. A recent visit to renew the car registration to the off-white Lubianka on C Street which houses the Department of Motor Vehicles was an eye-opener.

Unwilling to lose two or three days out of a working week, I used to pay Greg at the local garage to do this for me. Yet, bravely venturing into the unknown, I am treated with courtesy and dispatch especially by the unidentified employee who performed a marvellous impromptu stand-up act in explaining what documents were needed and in which line to stand. I am out within the hour.

Then I pick up the parish magazine, the Washington Post, and read that Camille Cates Barnett, our new city manager, has told the parking meter brigade it is no longer necessary to write 90 tickets a head per day in order to stay on the job. Only real offenders, she said, should be cited.

Actually, this is a bit of a two-edged sword. Three-quarters of the city's parking meters used to be decapitated or otherwise vandalised. Now new machines are being installed everywhere and they take nickels and dimes as well as just quarters.

Indeed they should all be in place by August, three months ahead of schedule. Under the ancien regime the millennium might have been a realistic target. The parish rag also runs a lovely column called Dr Gridlock, all about traffic problems. Citizens could let off steam and local officials occasionally deigned to explain why nothing could be done.

But now I read that the man in charge of traffic lights had personally sent a team to the junction of two busy avenues and concluded that a notorious left-turn signal was causing back-ups all the way to Bethesda. And it was changed.

I live in the Georgetown section, which is a bit snooty (and white) and has traditionally been viewed with contempt by Mayor Barry ("get used to it", he told us after winning back office in 1994). But now our potholed roads have been freshly tarmacked, our cobbled and bricked pavements exquisitely repaired and even our public tennis courts resurfaced. And there never were any votes for Hizonner here.

He has had no real power for a couple of years, having, in effect, been superseded by a congressionally appointed financial control board, which, in turn, has thoroughly shaken up the local bureaucracy (new police chief, schools superintendent, etc). But the board, headed by Andy Brimmer, the former Fed governor, has sometimes been a bit heavy-handed in its approach.

But now the word is that he will be replaced by a truly wonderful person Alice Rivlin, currently Alan Greenspan's No 2 at the Federal Reserve. Interestingly, she is keeping her central bank job, which should leave her plenty of time to look after the city.

The most bizarre testament to the new Washington came from Money Magazine, which has pronounced the metropolitan area the most "liveable" in the north-east, having ranked it 162nd nationally last year. Even one of the magazine's editors admitted he "scratched his head" when DC came top and, naturally, the Virginia and Maryland suburbs; included in the survey, claimed most of the credit, though that is typical of their hubris. But it did and that is good enough for us. There is even talk we might get a baseball team again. With that in place and Barry going, what else but full statehood can follow?■

Financial Times Syndication

Krakow: an architectural feast to rival Prague

By John Westbrooke

"OVER THERE is Oscar Schindler's house," said Barbara, our guide, pointing into the night. We peered from our coach window at an anonymous grey shape on a Krakow street, with no apparent signs to mark it as the home of the man who saved 1,200 Jews from the Nazi death camps.

But then, the city's cathedral also displays little to indicate that Pope John Paul was once archbishop here. In place of holy relics, all it has to draw the faithful is the shinbone of a mammoth, found nearby and now hung up outside the front door. Perhaps Poles are just forgetful; or perhaps they have yet to realise what a tourist attraction the homes of the famous are.

Doubtless they soon will. Krakow is only beginning to market itself as a tourist destination, but it has plenty to offer. Almost untouched by the war, its Old Town is an architectural feast to rival Prague or Vilnius. It is grimy in parts. The communists built the Nowa Huta steel works outside town, which they wanted to make more working class and less bourgeois-intellectual (ironically, the plant became a centre of anti-government activism), and its pollution lingers on. But in preparation for being European City of Culture in 2000, Krakow is gradually being cleaned up, and a baroque gem of a town is re-emerging.

Encircling the old town, where once the city walls ran, is a green belt called the Planty; and at its centre, ringed with mansions, is Rynek Glowny, one of Europe's biggest town squares. Its size looks manageable because there are other structures in it—dinky St Adalbert's church in one corner, a 14th-century tower now under scaffolding, and the long, yellow renaissance cloth hall down the middle, its arcades occupied by craft and souvenir shops. Amber is the local speciality.

Near another corner is St Mary's church, built around 1400 and famous for its carved and painted limewood altar by Veit Stoss. Its two mismatched towers are attributed by legend to rival brothers.

Another legend tells how a watchman in one of the towers, seeing the Tartars advancing, sounded the alarm with his bugle, only to be killed by an arrow through the throat. This is commemorated every hour by a trumpeter, playing a tune from the tower and stopping abruptly in the middle. The trumpeter, who leaned out of the high window and waved to us, is actually one of the church firemen.

Barbara was a moonlighting student, studying for an exam in Law and Logic. We called on her sister, also a student but working as a newspaper photographer. So many second jobs: Poland is still making its way from communism to EU membership and not everyone is wealthy. From a cursory glance, they seemed well-dressed and well-fed, and the shops well-stocked; but there were children in the streets playing accordions and begging.

From the square, we walked down Ulica Grodzka, a street seemingly lined with churches, to Wawel hill, where a bronze dragon stands breathing fire. Its ancestor, a real dragon, guarded Wawel long ago until a cobbler killed it and





was rewarded by the original Prince Krak with half the kingdom. The castle and cathedral on top of the hill are at the heart of the city, even of the country: the Pope has called his former seat 'the national sanctuary', and most Polish kings, Wladyslaws and Sigismunds and so on, are buried there. Architecturally, though, it is not exactly coherent. The cathedral is a flurry of baroque, gothic and romanesque spires and domes.

The castle—half fortress, half palace—is built around a courtyard of arcades which look Florentine, only a lot bigger. The state rooms feature work by a succession of nearly men: follower of Bosch, circle of Botticelli, brother of Durer. On the walls hang 136 mildly faded tapestries from the collection of King Sigismund Augustus, and overhead in the audience hall 30 carved heads look down from a coffered ceiling—an unexpected touch of human detail, like misericord carvings in a church.

The other part of Krakow which draws visitors is Kazimierz, the old Jewish quarter. Here, Steven Spielberg filmed much of Schindler's List, more or less where the events happened. Krakow was once one of the great Jewish centres of Europe; now the synagogues are mostly unused. But, sparked by the film's success, buildings are being renovated. bookshops and museums opened; and you can go on a Schindler's List Tour.

For a more painful insight into Jewish history, go 40 miles west to the town of Oswiecim—Auschwitz, centre of Nazi plans for a genocidal 'final solution' to the 'Jewish problem.' The grim brick barracks are still there, with the cynical 'Arbeit macht frei' (Work makes you free) sign over the entrance, and the gallows where the commandant, Rudolf Hess, was finally hanged. You can see the basement where the Nazis first tested the Zyklon B gas they used for industrialised murder, and the crematorium where they burnt the bodies. The ashes were sold as fertiliser.

Tellingly, the exhibits avoid atrocities. A photo of some walking children notes that they had already unknowingly undergone the selection process (between those marked for immediate slaughter and those spared to be worked to death) and were strolling to destruction; but that is about as direct as it gets.

Instead, showcases contain thousands of shoes, suitcases, toothbrushes, all collected from inmates—even hair, the only human remains on display, and the cloth which was woven from it and sold. The Nazis wasted nothing but lives.

There were two other Auschwitzes. One was a slave labour camp built nearby in the grounds of IG Farben, the chemical company which made Zyklon B: it has been destroyed. The third was Birkenau, a much bigger site a mile away; this was where most of the killings took place, and can also be visited. About 1.5m people died here. It is profoundly depressing. As we walked around, the temperature plummeted and a blizzard blew up, but no one liked to complain—indeed, the weather seemed merely appropriate.

The site is still controversial: some Jews feel the exhibits concentrate too much on others who died here—Russians, gypsies, Poles—and protested when a cross, commemorating a papal Mass, was erected outside. Jews suspect lingering anti-Semitism; Poles feel their own suffering is slighted. More protests greeted a convent established outside (the nuns moved) and a planned supermarket over the road (left half-finished).

It does raise awkward questions: how far should memorials extend? And who should decide who is remembered there? I pondered over these questions as I drove back through a calm countryside of birch trees and wooden barns to the city and dinner.■

Financial Times Syndication



Caroline Lefilliatre, beneath a bust of her ancestor Napoleon, is also descended from a line of bakers dating back to 1788. Photo by Mark Finkenstaed

Descendant of Napoleon battles for Washington's bread business

By Walter Nicholls

WASHINGTON—Caroline Lefilliatre isn't late for her luncheon date. Still, the poised and striking 24-year-old vice president of Buonaparte Breads, her family's wholesale and retail bakery in Savage Mill, Md., is racing her champagne-colored Ford Probe down crowded Route 1. What's the rush? "It's my sign. I'm Aries. I'm a passionate woman," says Lefilliatre, who prefers European-made designer clothes and five-inch heels. She tucks a wayward auburn curl behind one ear and says in her sultry French accent: "I like taking risks at every level."

Risks? Lefilliatre, a trained concert pianist (that explains the poise) who moved here with her family from Paris 18 months ago, is alluding to Buonaparte Breads' plunge into Washington's bread wars. Buonaparte wants a piece of the high-end action.

Lefilliatre says she doesn't worry about all the other loaves out there. "I'm determined and I know what I want to do," she says.

Lefilliatre believes her rustic, pre-World War II-style baguette—an ashen, hand-formed, slightly twisted, hard-crusted bread with a silky, moist interior—is different, and better than the rest, no matter how you slice it.

She is driven to succeed, she says, by history. The Lefilliatres trace their lineage to Emperor Napoleon I, through the Neel de Nehou branch of their family. (Buonaparte is the Corsican spelling.)

Bread is in her blood, too.

Her family has owned La Boule Miche, a landmark boulangerie (bakery) on Saint-Germain-des-Pres in the Latin Quarter of Paris, since 1788, one year before the French Revolution. Her grandfather, Edoward Zareba, manned the oven for more than 50 years.

"I'm doing this because I love my grandfather who dearly loved making bread," she says. "And I'm sure he's watching me up there."

And if he is, he's not the only one. Buonaparte's competition has an eye on them as well.

"Their bread has improved a lot since they opened. It was gummy and sticky in the middle," says Washington's dough doyen Mark Furstenberg. He sees no need for the other bread makers to worry. "What Buonaparte is doing is no different than what Marvelous, Uptown and Firehook are doing," he says, referring to Marvelous Market, Uptown Bakers and Firehook Bakers, considered the Big Three in the area for European-style bread.

But Lefilliatre doesn't call her breads "European-style." That's what makes them different, she says. "We don't reproduce the image. This is the real stuff," says Lefilliatre, who feels her breads can't be compared to the competition. "We aren't a mix of French and American putting fancy things like olives and cranberries in. We are traditional French bakers from the French school with old family recipes," she says.

Still, the real challenge that Buonaparte faces is too much bread.

When Furstenberg opened Marvelous Market in 1991, offering crusty sourdough loaves, the lines were regularly out the door. That was then. Today the Washington area has wholesale and retail bakeries large and small turning out European-style breads.

"There's too much capacity right now," says Furstenberg, who sold his interest in Marvelous after a disastrous over-expansion and bankruptcy. He now owns Bread Line, a bakery/cafe near the White House, and predicts that prices for premium breads will soon tumble as even more new players enter the fray.

Michael Meyer, CEO of Marvelous Market, who revamped the ailing chain, says: "There's paranoia every year" when a new bakery opens. They (Buonaparte Breads) came in with a bang and got people talking," says Meyer. "But it's a very complex business to make fresh products and deliver them every day. It's a real skill and few companies have mastered it," he says. Marvelous, which has grown to eight stores after buying the Baker's Place chain last summer, now has 80 wholesale customers.

Yes. Flour is flying. Even the supermarket chains have gone crusty.

On the other end of the scale, specialty grocer Dean & DeLuca in Georgetown recently opened an in-house bakery. Pastry chef Rosemary Hubbard now produces her French and Italian regional pastries and breads under the "Rosemary at Dean & DeLuca" label.

But Meyer says Corner Bakery, with its "deep pockets" is the one to watch. Corner, a bistro-style bakery and cafe chain owned by Dallas-based Brinker International, opened an 11,500-square-foot production center in Fairfax, Va., last month.

Still, Caroline Lefilliatre is in this for the long haul. And that's what's so interesting. She's young. She's alluring. She's a shrewd, hard-working single mom (her five-year marriage to American concert pianist Eric Himy, 41, just ended in divorce). She could be more easily imagined sunbathing or sipping an aperitif at her family's 16th-century stone manor house in Normandy or people-watching at a cafe in the shadow of Notre Dame than bombing around in a Probe. Says Lefilliatre: "My life has changed so much. I could be anywhere in the world. And here I am."

And so are her parents—her father, Pierre, who bears an eerie resemblance to the notorious emperor, and mother, Claudie, who helps with the bookkeeping. They divide their time among their new American enterprise, the boulangerie in Paris and Cafe Du Port, a seaside inn and restaurant in Normandy, which they opened when they were both 24 years old.

Pierre's brother Patrick and brother-in-law Jacques Martin bake the pastries for Buonaparte Breads' retail shop. The family brought master baker Serge Merlin from their Paris shop to bake the breads.

But Caroline Lefilliatre doesn't help with the baking. She does everything else, though, on the business end. She regularly visits her customers (a personal touch, rare in the bread world, where more often one answering machine talks to another). She handles the billing as well as advertising for the retail store/cafe and wholesale division. She's working on a Web site.

Her former husband "introduced us to America and helped us with the language," she says. Now the family is on its own. The Lefillatres decided to build their $600,000 bakery operation near Washington because friends in the local French community told them that the bread available in the area was not "the right quality." And they chose historic Savage Mill, a former textile factory that now houses art, craft, antiques and gift shops, for its location halfway between Baltimore and Washington.

Buonaparte Breads has a wholesale customer waiting list. Currently their clients—besides the French and German embassies—includes hotels and Dean & DeLuca. Their bakers and a Spanish-made, red-brick, wood-burning oven are working at capacity. The family is looking for a new site to house four to five additional ovens.

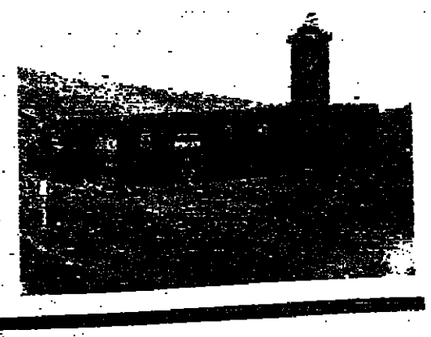
But expansion is one area that the Lefilliatres are approaching with caution. They are well aware of what happens when resourses are stretched too thin. And the last thing Caroline Lefilliatre wants are worry lines.■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Le Jourdain
Supplément en français du Star

La mosquée Al-Husseini au centre d'un village *par Véronique Abu-Nijmeh*

«Il y a sur la place du marché une jolie mosquée dont la cour est ornée de mosaïques», tel est le témoignage d'un voyageur du Xème siècle à propos de la mosquée actuelle du balad. *Jami'al-Husseini al-Kabir. Si la dernière restauration de l'édifice date de 1923, son histoire prend naissance dans la lointaine époque omeyyade. D'après le style architectural que l'on peut voir sur les photos du XIXème siècle (ci-contre, une photo de 1869), la mosquée est d'environ 50 ans plus ancienne que le 4alais de la citadelle, ce qui donne la date approximative de 700 ap. J.-C.. Ses dimensions d'alors dépassaient celles de l'édifice actuel. Elle devait sans doute accueillir non seulement les habitants de la bourgade mais aussi les hommes disséminés à la ronde dans les contrées désertiques. La mosquée subit sa première restauration entre le IXème et le Xème siècle. À cette occasion, sa superficie fut réduite, ce qui indique un déclin de la population. Un minaret carré ne lui fut ajouté qu'en 1089. Puis son histoire se perd dans l'abandon progressif du site jusqu'aux témoignages des explorateurs du XIXème siècle qui décrivent ses ruines : une vaste cour, dont la façade nord est encore debout, avec dans le fond une salle de prière. Grâce à l'installation des Circassiens dès 1881, la mosquée reprend vie. La salle de prière est reconstruite mais le mur nord reste encore isolé. Au début du XXème siècle, l'ensemble du bâtiment est rebâti avec diverses adjonctions qui en font aujourd'hui l'un des plus beaux édifices d'Amman.* ●



Éclabousseures

Non au travail des enfants !

Exploités, maltraités, selon l'Unicef, ils sont quelque 250 millions dans le monde, de 5 à 14 ans, à travailler pour survivre. Même dans les pays les plus riches. Mais depuis deux ans, plusieurs marches internationales ont été organisées contre le travail des enfants : en novembre dernier, des jeunes Indiens d'une douzaine d'années manifestaient à New Delhi pour réclamer l'application de leurs droits et alerter l'opinion sur leurs conditions épouvantables d'emploi pour des salaires de misère. En Jordanie aussi. En 1995, une association nationale dénonçait l'exploitation d'enfants dans certains ateliers de couture pour boucler les commandes. Dans la région, un autre rapport de l'Unicef sur le travail des enfants au Liban condamne des fabriques de ballons de football où ils triment douze heures par jour enfermés au fond des caves. Recrutés ou même vendus par leur famille qui pense assurer leur avenir, ces petits clandestins se retrouvent piégés dans une spirale infernale. Le problème, c'est qu'il n'existe pas de centres adéquats pour recueillir des jeunes souvent livrés à eux-mêmes et aux multiples dangers de la rue. Ils sont alors «ramassés» par des sociétés qui ne pensent que rentabilité et chiffre d'affaires.

D'un autre côté, il est vrai, le travail des enfants apporte un revenu nécessaire à la survie de la famille. Le leur retirer, c'est renvoyer les enfants à la rue. L'association Save the Children envisage dans un premier temps d'obliger les entreprises qui emploient des enfants à assurer un enseignement quotidien de quatre heures. Il s'agirait ensuite d'abolir complètement le travail des enfants.

Réduire la pauvreté par la scolarisation obligatoire et gratuite pour tous, c'est aussi la stratégie adoptée par l'Unicef et le Bureau international du travail qui prévoient de supprimer les formes les plus intolérables du travail des enfants dans les 15 ans à venir. D'autres groupements exigent que les grandes entreprises internationales s'engagent en faveur d'un code de bonne conduite et acceptent un contrôle des conditions de travail pratiquées par leurs fournisseurs. Ainsi l'association Artisans du monde a profité de la Coupe du monde pour alerter les fabricants de vêtements de sport sur les conditions d'emploi déplorables en Asie. Ici, une récente étude réalisée par le Centre des études sociales de l'Université de Jordanie montre que 70% des consommateurs sont prêts à payer plus cher des produits fabriqués dans le respect des droits de l'homme et de boycotter en revanche les produits inciviques. Même si la situation en Jordanie est loin d'être aussi préoccupante qu'en Asie par exemple, une prise de conscience généralisée (ou plutôt «globalisée») est essentielle. Les entreprises doivent comprendre qu'elles ne peuvent plus impunément bafouer les droits des enfants. ■

Youssef Abu Saleh

THE STAR,
maintenant
au Doustour
5664153

L'événement

La France des Bleus est si belle

En gagnant pour la première fois de son histoire la Coupe du monde de football, l'équipe de France a déclenché d'incroyables manifestations de joie à travers tout l'Hexagone. Et elle n'a pas seulement remporté un trophée de manière brillante en battant les quadruples champions du monde brésiliens 3 à 0, elle a permis à un pays entier de se redécouvrir et de s'apprécier.



Plus d'un million de Françaises et de Français se sont retrouvés sur les Champs-Élysées pour fêter la victoire de l'équipe de France. Leur signe de reconnaissance et de ralliement : le drapeau tricolore.

Des millions de personnes devant leurs écrans, des millions dans les rues. La France a vécu de dimanche à lundi une des plus folles nuits de son histoire. Jamais depuis la Libération en 1945 l'avenue des Champs-Élysées n'avait connu autant de monde. Et on ne se rappelait pas en avoir déjà vu autant, dans les centres des grandes villes de province.

Pour beaucoup de supporters, cette nuit de folie a été l'occasion d'étaler ses dons musicaux : trompette, cornet, piston, sifflet, percussions, cornemuse, flûte... Tout y est passé. Certains se sont même lancés dans des concerts de panneaux de signalisation ou de couvercles de poubelles. Qu'importe le support, le but était d'abord de manifester bruyamment sa joie et sa reconnaissance.

À Paris, la place de la Bastille a bien failli chavirer sous la ferveur du public. Sous le poids de centaines de supporters, la colonne de Juillet semblait tout d'un coup bien fragile. Tout autour de ce totem magique, des milliers de fans dansaient et chantaient. Tout là-haut, le génie de la Liberté prenait des allures de génie de la Victoire.

Mais les imprécations lancées par ces adorateurs d'un soir n'avaient rien à voir avec les prophéties inquiétantes des sectes. *«Et 1, et 2, et 3-zéro»*, lançait une partie de la foule, répondant ainsi aux *«On est champions, on est champions...»* ou bien *«Et ils sont où, et ils sont où les Brésiliens ?»*. Soudain, plus rien ne semblait distinguer les gens dans la rue. Finis les costumes classieux et les ensembles luxueux. Tout le monde avait adopté la mode bleu-blanc-rouge, avec bien souvent un assortiment maquillage-vêtements.

Agglutinés dans des voitures, juchés sur des camions-poubelles ou bien formant des brochettes sur les motos et les scooters, les supporters enthousiastes n'avaient plus besoin que d'un ingrédient pour exulter : le drapeau tricolore. Le temps d'une nuit, la *Marseillaise* est même devenue la chanson de l'été, reprise sur tous les tempos et avec toutes les instrumentalisations possibles.

Enivrés par la victoire, les Français avaient à la fois perdu leurs repères et leurs défenses. Un regard suffisait pour se jeter dans les bras du premier inconnu, s'embrasser affectueusement et partager sa joie. Le moindre bassin devint une piscine olympique capable d'accueillir des dizaines de baigneurs.

Fatigués, époumonés, les supporters ont alors regagné leurs domiciles au petit jour, non sans lâcher une dernière salve de coups de klaxon sur le chemin du retour.

À leur réveil, ils ont pu réaliser l'incroyable : non seulement la France avait gagné pour la première fois la Coupe du monde de football, mais elle l'avait fait avec une équipe qui leur ressemble. Le temps d'un Mondial, les fractures de la société française ont paru moins grandes. Les centres-villes réunissaient la population des quartiers cossus et celle des quartiers défavorisés. À l'image de son équipe nationale, la France découvrait l'efficacité et la réussite du métissage. Les trois derniers buteurs français sont l'illustration même des nouvelles couleurs de la République : black-blanc-beur pour Thuram, Petit et Zidane. Chaque communauté célébrait son héros : «Zizou» le kabyle pour les immigrés d'origine nord-africaine, Lizarazu pour les Basques, Guivarc'h pour les Bretons. Une seule chose comptait : scander ensemble le nom des héros.

Chirac comme Blanc

Les images d'enfants d'immigrés chantant à tue-tête l'hymne national et revendiquant leur fierté d'être Français sont la plus belle preuve de l'intégration des communautés étrangères en France.

Certes, cette euphorie risque d'être passagère et les vrais problèmes auxquels sont confrontés les Français ressurgiront très rapidement. Mais le temps d'une nuit, la hiérarchie s'est inversée : le sport est devenu l'unique préoccupation et la fête le seul moyen d'expression. Les débordements tant redoutés par les forces de l'ordre ne se sont pas produits, les supporters perdant le sens des réalités mais pas la raison. Seul un incident est venu troubler les festivités sur les Champs-Élysées : une voiture lancée dans la foule a fauché et blessé près de 80 personnes, dont 11 sont aujourd'hui dans un état grave. Mais cet accident est dû à la réaction de panique d'une automobiliste déséquilibrée, non à des affrontements ou à des bagarres de hooligans.

Dès lundi midi, les supporters reprenaient le chemin de la plus belle avenue du monde pour acclamer leurs idoles qui tentaient de se frayer un passage en bus au milieu d'une foule compacte. Pour des millions de Français, la fête nationale avait pris un jour d'avance, le pont du 14 juillet leur offrant une journée supplémentaire de célébration.

Cette réconciliation populaire a fait bien sûr aussi le bonheur des hommes politiques qui ont vu la force de la France dans sa diversité. *«Quand j'ai vu, le soir de la victoire sur nos amis italiens, ce qu'on appelle des blacks et des beurs, avec des drapeaux tricolores, chantant la Marseillaise et se réjouissant, ça m'a paru être des images très réjouissantes, opportunes dans la période où nous sommes»*, déclarait le Premier ministre Lionel Jospin après le quart de finale.

Au lendemain de la finale, toutes les formations politiques françaises ont salué ce triomphe multicolore. Seul perdant de cette victoire collective : le parti xénophobe du Front National. Son président Jean-Marie Le Pen, qui avait déclaré en 1996 qu'il était *«artificiel de faire venir des joueurs et de les baptiser équipe de France»*, a tenté lui aussi de récupérer cette victoire en *«félicitant chaleureusement les Bleus»*. Dans un communiqué du FN, Zinedine Zidane devenait tout à coup *«un enfant de l'Algérie française»*, lui qui est né à Marseille dix ans après la proclamation de l'indépendance de l'Algérie. Mais au milieu de manifestations de joie et de fraternité, ces propos déplacés ne pouvaient rien. Et ils ont logiquement été submergés par la fièvre de la victoire.

Pendant deux jours, rien d'autre ne semblait compter en France.

L'apothéose est venue avec la traditionnelle *garden-party* de l'Élysée organisée à l'occasion du 14 juillet. À peine avait-il terminé son allocution traditionnelle, en grande partie consacrée à la Coupe du monde, que le président Jacques Chirac recevait les 22 héros bleus et leur entraîneur Aimé Jacquet. L'orchestre de la garde républicaine se mettait alors au goût du jour et interprétait «We are the champions» et «I will survive», deux des hymnes favoris des joueurs français et de leurs supporters. Au milieu des 6.000 jeunes invités pour cette *party* moins collet monté que d'habitude, Jacques Chirac s'est même joint aux chants de la foule.

Cette image de délire collectif qui gagne même le premier personnage de l'État est sans aucun doute l'une de celles qui resteront gravés dans les mémoires. Portant un maillot avec le numéro 23, le président de la République n'avait d'ailleurs pas hésité à reproduire dans les vestiaires de l'équipe de France à l'issue de la demi-finale, le geste de Laurent Blanc embrassant le crâne rasé du gardien Fabien Barthez.

Comme cinq autres pays avant elle, la France a remporté la Coupe du monde qu'elle organisait. L'équipe nationale sait qu'elle ne pouvait pas offrir plus beau cadeau à un public hésitant avant le début de la compétition, qui attendait un déclic pour apporter sans réserve son soutien.

La folie bleue va désormais peu à peu retomber et la vie du pays va reprendre son cours normal. Mais une chose est certaine : chaque nouveau match des Bleus sera une sorte de piqûre de rappel. Les noms des joueurs français évoqueront un mois de passion, une nuit d'euphorie.

Oui, l'équipe de France a fait plus que gagner le plus grand événement sportif de cette fin de siècle, elle a gagné le cœur des Français en leur montrant qu'ils pouvaient réussir de grandes choses ensemble. ■

De notre correspondant à Paris, Olivier Bras

Les Jordaniens derrière leur écran

Ce soir, on vous met le feu !

«On a gagné ! On a gagné !» Dans la communauté française de Jordanie, on ne cherche plus d'exprimer son bonheur, alors on agite les drapeaux. En face, bonjour l'ambiance. Des drapeaux tricolores claquent au vent. La France est championne du monde de football. Les Bleus ont battu les arrogants Brésiliens. Une surprise, une première historique, un exploit qui a submergé d'émotion tous les Français à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur de la métropole. *Le Jourdain* a vécu cette nuit de folie à Amman qui a commencé dans un de ces multiples cafés branchés sur la finale. La terrasse, face à l'écran géant, ressemble à un stade : d'un côté les supporters des Bleus, de l'autre les aficionados du Brésil et de Ronaldo et au milieu, les éternels indécis qui choisiront leur camp en fonction de l'évolution du match. Quelques minutes avant le coup d'envoi, les deux équipes sont déjà à l'image. Des *«ouh»* et des *«ouais»* pas très fair-play pour saluer les apparitions de l'une ou de l'autre. L'arbitre marocain lance la rencontre et la tension monte d'un cran dans le café. Au premier but de Zizou, tout le monde debout. La cinquantaine de Français présents ce soir-là explose de soulagement. Les fans du Brésil ne peuvent y croire : *«C'est la chance, vous allez voir ce que le Brésil va faire maintenant»*. Mais le Brésil ne fait rien. Quelques occasions ratées pour la *seleçao* et c'est déjà le deuxième but de Zinedine. Cependant, la caméra reste envi. Les téléspectateurs ne voient pas le ballon dans le fond des filets. Sourires crispés. Le temps d'un point d'interrogation, un léger recadrage, et c'est le délire chez les supporters français qui deviennent comme on chante : *«Il est vraiment ...»*, on danse, on pavoise aux couleurs des drapeaux. En face, bonjour l'ambiance. Le Brésil craint pour l'avenir de ses stars : *«Mon père va divorcer de ma mère, c'est une question de vie ou de mort»*. D'autres dénoncent une conspiration, tout est arrangé depuis le début pour que la France gagne chez elle.

Nuit blanche pour «l'ambass»

Pendant la mi-temps, les Français ne savent pas s'il faut croire à la victoire ou non. Une hallucination, pas rancunière, prédit un but d'Emmanuel Petit. Puis tout le monde retrouve sa place. Il reste 45 minutes à jouer. Trop longues pour les uns, trop courtes pour les autres. Et ces Brésiliens qui ne marquent toujours pas. *«Il vont être assassinés à leur retour s'ils perdent»*, s'inquiète déjà un fan, qui reprend espoir à l'expulsion de Marcel Desailly. *«Non, non»*, gueule-t-il, les Français plus chauvins que jamais. *«Tu vas voir, ils vont certainement marquer un but maintenant»*, se hasarde un supporter en jaune. Mais rien ne vient, sauf le but d'Emmanuel Petit qui signe l'enterrement première classe des Brésiliens et la victoire de la France. *«On est champions, on est champions !»*. Le public tricolore n'attend même pas le coup de sifflet final, quelques secondes plus tard. Cette fois, c'est bien vrai. Personne ne peut plus rien y faire. Ni la samba, ni les *jours heureux* brésiliens. La France est championne du monde. Didier Deschamps, le capitaine des Bleus, monte sur la table présidentielle et soulève le trophée tant convoité à côté d'un Platini hilare. Dans le café, les Français ne savent plus trop comment exprimer leur bonheur trop fort.

Puis, la retransmission s'interrompt brutalement. Mais comment en terminer là ? Un cortège bleu, blanc, rouge est improvisé : quelques voitures reprises rapidement sur la route, des cercles par des Jordaniens fervents supporters de la France et qui ont gardé un nœud dans la gorge, l'élimination précoce du Maroc, à cause du Brésil. Devant la résidence de l'ambassade de France, concerts de klaxons et de *«Mabrouk»* à des heures où un petit singe. Nuit blanche pour l'ambass. Bientôt la caravane brave la foule en mini-embouteillage sur les Champs-Élysées d'Abdoun. Les policiers retirent le bouchon sur le rond-point, chacun sa fête. Un groupe d'irréductibles file vers la Mer Morte pour un bain de minuit. D'autres s'en vont aussi ailleurs, comme dans le classique *Trois hommes et un couffin*. Les plus fatigués rentrent chez eux, histoire d'espérer de rêver encore de Bleus triomphateurs. ■

Samar Abu Sharar et Yannick Laine



Au deuxième but de Zizou, les [illegible] français d'Amman deviennent comme fous.

Le mot de la semaine

«DÉMOCRATIE»

Démocratie signifie littéralement souveraineté du peuple (du grec dêmos, le peuple, et kratos, la domination) et correspond à l'origine à une forme de régime où n'importe quel citoyen peut accéder aux plus hautes institutions dirigeantes de l'État, où les décisions sont prises par des représentants du peuple et où, sur l'initiative d'un simple citoyen, la volonté populaire peut proposer, choisir ou refuser une législation ou une option politique.

Dans ses aspects les plus divers, la démocratie est diamétralement opposée à la monarchie (littéralement commandement d'un seul homme). Aujourd'hui le terme de démocratie est de plus en plus employé lorsqu'il s'agit de légitimer un régime, quel qu'il soit, trop souvent galvaudé dans les discours politiques au prix d'un appauvrissement et d'une déformation sémantique. En effet, le sens tend à glisser confusément vers «respect des droits de l'homme» ou «liberté d'expression» ou encore tout ce qui semble s'y référer. De ce fait, cette notion est d'emblée acceptée par le commun des mortels et constitue une désignation commode pour les programmes politiques les plus divers. Cet affaiblissement sémantique ouvre la voie à toutes les aberrations et les abus d'emploi. D'un côté, certains, sous le couvert d'une notion qui autorise à leurs yeux, toute licence, tempêtent à tout vent. De l'autre, des monarques et dirigeants totalitaires proclament leur État démocratique, pourvu qu'un simulacre d'élections ait été organisé un jour dans le pays. Finalement personne ne sait plus vraiment ce que recouvre le terme, si ce n'est un idéal dont chacun cherche à s'accaparer le bénéfice. ■

Véronique Abu-Nijmeh



C'est la vie

L'agenda français d'Amman

Cinéma

Cycle consacré aux sourires du cinéma français.

Adorable menteuse, film de Michel Deville (1961) en noir et blanc, sous-titré en arabe avec Marina Vlady et Macha Méril.

Deux sœurs de caractère opposé parviennent à créer un tourbillon de sentiments autour d'elles. **Lundi 20 juillet au Centre culturel français à 18h30 et 20h30. Renseignements au CCF au 4636445 ou 4637009.**

Exposition

De très belles pages ont été écrites sur le sport. De Honoré de Balzac à Georges Pérec en passant par Victor Hugo, l'exposition **«Sport et littérature»** nous en présente les principales réalisations en 22 affiches. **Jusqu'au 30 juillet au CCF.**



Le Moyen-Orient dans la presse française

Menace écologique sur les pays du Golfe

«N'est-il *pas temps que l'Union européenne vienne au secours d'une paix menacée ?»*, s'interroge-t-on dans l'édition de juillet du *Monde diplomatique*. Une question qui fait écho à l'interview accordée la semaine dernière par l'ambassadeur de France en Jordanie, Bernard Bajolet, au Jourdain. Dans son article titré *«Comment l'Europe peut faire pression sur Israël»*, Isabelle Avran explique que *«l'intransigeance de M. Benjamin Netanyahou s'appuie sur l'incapacité des États-Unis à faire pression sur leur allié»*. La journaliste fait ainsi référence aux négociations de Madrid qui, selon elle, «ont entériné un partage des rôles», où l'Europe *«se voit reléguée au rôle d'appui «complémentaire» surtout dans le domaine économique et financier»*. Or, souligne-t-on, l'atout maître de l'Europe, c'est justement l'économie. Au Vieux Continent de trouver les mesures adéquates qui *«contraindraient le gouvernement israélien à des choix cruciaux et à comprendre qu'il y a un prix à payer à la poursuite d'une politique de force et de sabotage des accords de paix»*. Des mesures qui, selon la journaliste, ne devraient être ni un embargo, comme en Irak, ni un blocus tel que celui imposé aux populations palestiniennes par Israël.

À la une de l'actualité israélo-arabe dans la presse française, l'intervention de la France dans l'échange de corps et de prisonniers entre Israël et le Liban. Pour l'hebdomadaire *Le Point*, *«l'affaire ne pouvait tomber mieux»* à quinze jours de la visite du président syrien en France. *«Jacques Chirac vient de marquer un but sur la scène diplomatique»*, estime le magazine qui salue les fruits récoltés d'une médiation de dix mois en faveur de cet échange.

Dans son numéro d'été, juillet-août, *Arabies* consacre un long article à la catastrophe écologique qui menace les pays du Golfe et que les journalistes dépeignent en ces termes : *«[illegible] nombreux bâtiments sinistrés de la marine irakienne demeurent à demi immergés dans certaines eaux profondes du nord du Golfe. La plupart renferment toujours des bombes qui n'ont pas explosé ou laissent échapper leur cargaison de pétrole»*. Les dangers pour la santé des hommes sont également évoqués. Le journaliste Gerad Butt affirme que *«la population du sud de l'Irak connaissait déjà de graves problèmes de santé dus à l'absorption de toxines qui se sont infiltrées dans la chaîne alimentaire»* et il ajoute que, selon certains experts, *«il existe un lien direct entre le nombre croissant de personnes malades et l'augmentation de la population. La vie de centaines de milliers d'Irakiens dépend des réserves d'eau du Chott al-Arab, dans lequel des douzaines d'épaves éventrées laissent échapper des produits chimiques extrêmement toxiques»*. Le reporter fait enfin ce constat peu rassurant : *«Les poissons pêchés dans ces eaux sont souvent moribonds ou présentent des tumeurs cancéreuses»*.



Les bâtiments sinistrés de la marine irakienne menacent les populations riveraines.

Toujours dans *Arabies*, un article plein d'espoir sur les femmes libanaises. Un nouveau festival vient ainsi d'être lancé à Beyrouth *«grâce à la passion de cinq femmes»*. Depuis la fin des hostilités, le Liban culturel renaît. Et, se félicite le magazine, *«ce sont principalement des femmes qui, dans ce domaine, maintiennent le flambeau»*. ■

Revue de presse réalisée par Nahed Al-Khlouf

Société

Allô, l'Unité de protection à votre service

Le Département de la sécurité publique a ouvert il y a cinq mois un centre spécialisé pour recevoir et guider les femmes et les mineurs victimes de violences domestiques et sociales. Des policiers y sont à l'écoute de la détresse.

Oum Ziad est une femme d'une cinquantaine d'années. Réveillée comme tous les matins à sept heures, elle prépare le petit déjeuner de la famille. Mais ce matin-là, quand elle entre dans la chambre de sa fille de 17 ans, Iman, elle ne trouve qu'un petit mot sur le lit : *«Je m'enfuis avec mon amoureux, je ne reviendrai jamais»*. Sur les conseils de sa voisine, Oum Ziad compose le 5623345 sur son téléphone : *«Allô, l'Unité de protection de la famille à votre service»*.

Ahmad est un enfant d'une dizaine d'années qui n'a pas eu d'enfance : victime de son oncle qui abuse de lui depuis trois ans. Mais il ne dit rien, ni à son père toujours en colère, ni à sa mère qui ne le croit jamais. Un jour, à l'école, le professeur évoque le sujet. Après la classe, Ahmad ne retourne pas à la maison. Il prend un taxi : *«À l'Unité de protection de la famille, s'il vous plaît»*.

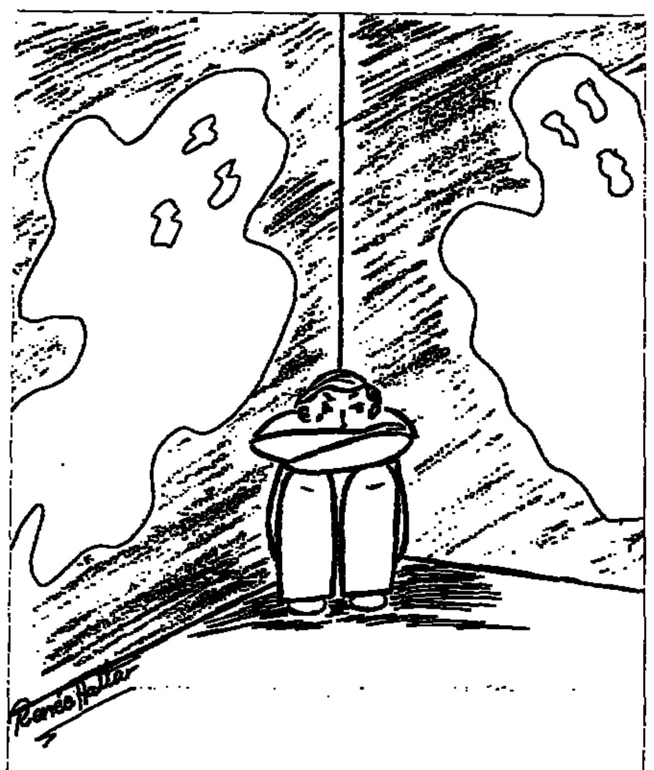
Maryame, à 25 ans, est mariée depuis cinq ans à un monstre dans un corps d'homme. Chaque jour, elle a rendez-vous avec les coups parce que cet homme n'utilise que les poings et les cannes pour parler. Par hasard, un message à la radio, et Maryame contacte l'Unité de protection de la famille.

«À l'heure actuelle, on remarque une augmentation des crimes d'abus sexuels et corporels et des violences familiales en général. Les victimes sont toujours des femmes et des enfants, analyse Hussein Al-Sarhan, directeur du centre, *ce constat est à l'origine de la création d'un département policier spécial pour traiter ces cas et protéger les femmes et les enfants»*. La dernière étude réalisée par le Département de la sécurité publique montre que 2500 mineurs ont été victimes de divers crimes (enlèvement, viol etc...) entre 1993 et 1996. Quant aux femmes, une autre étude indique l'enregistrement par la police de près de 5000 cas de violences domestiques en 91 et 92. Des chiffres minimums, puisque selon les travailleurs sociaux, de nombreuses victimes hésitent encore à porter plainte. D'où la création en février dernier de cette unité spécialisée, réclamée par le roi Hussein lui-même en 97 dans le discours de la couronne. Cinq femmes et trois hommes ont suivi une formation avec des instructeurs britanniques pour apprendre à traiter les victimes de violences familiales, savoir comment les interroger quand elles sont en état de choc.

Dialogues enregistrés

Quand on entre dans le département de protection de la famille, la première chose qui attire l'œil est une chambre où se mélangent différents regards, différents sentiments. L'une est inquiète et ne cesse de s'agiter, une autre jeune fille garde ses yeux pleins de larmes fixés au sol. Nous sommes dans la salle de réception où les victimes présentent leur plainte.

«On reçoit ces plaintes soit par téléphone, soit, comme ici, sur témoignage, précise le lieutenant Tarrid. *Afin d'éviter qu'elles expliquent leur cas à plusieurs personnes, elles sont prises en charge par un seul policier, une femme si la victime est une femme, car on sait qu'une femme préférera se confier à une autre femme, un homme si la victime est un enfant* (car le plus souvent il s'agit d'un garçon. NDLR)». Deux pièces sont réservées à l'interrogation des plaignants, l'une pour les femmes, l'autre pour les enfants qui peuvent dessiner et profiter des jeux. Elles sont équipées de caméras vidéo pour enregistrer les dialogues. Ensuite les victimes sont examinées par un médecin légiste, dont les conclusions sont envoyées au laboratoire de la criminalité. *«Le cas passe ensuite devant le tribunal»*, termine le lieutenant pour qui ce travail demande *«rapidité et confidentialité»*.



Mais le rôle de l'Unité de protection de la famille ne s'arrête pas aux portes du tribunal. Elle aide également la victime à trouver un endroit confortable et calme pour préserver sa sécurité, si elle ne veut pas retourner chez elle ou si le coupable est un membre de la famille. *«Ce lieu peut être choisi par la victime elle-même*, explique Hussein Al-Sarhan, *si elle n'a pas d'idée, on la place dans un centre spécialisé qui dépend du Ministère du développement social»*. Si la victime décide en revanche de rentrer chez elle, le personnel de l'Unité de protection vient lui rendre visite régulièrement pour s'assurer qu'elle est bien traitée. Enfin, ce département organise des cours et des réunions pour sensibiliser les femmes et les enfants sur leurs droits et favoriser la prise de conscience des mauvais traitements...

Quatre jours après sa disparition, l'Unité de protection de la famille retrouve la fille d'Oum Ziad. La mère pardonne. Iman rentre chez elle. L'«amoureux» est mis en prison.

Ahmad est aussi revenu chez lui. Ses parents s'engagent à être plus vigilants.

Maryame a demandé le divorce avec son mari. ■

Fatin Mansi

Les noms des victimes ou de leurs parents ont été modifiés afin de respecter leur anonymat.

Pour contacter l'Unité de protection de la famille : 562334(5 à 9).

International

Le monde arabe uni : un rêve d'enfant

La semaine dernière, la fondation Noor Al-Hussein réunissait à Amman les enfants du Maghreb au Machrek. Théâtre, musique, danse, chacun a exprimé à sa manière son attachement aux droits de l'enfant arabe et à l'unité d'un monde que les adultes ont divisé.



Au-delà des spécificités régionales et des différents accents, les enfants ont su échanger leurs diverses expériences et se déclarent prêts à défendre ensemble les causes arabes.

Une véritable ruche. Des dizaines d'enfants s'activent bruyamment dans l'entrée du Centre des Arts Appliqués. Dans une pièce à gauche, des filles travaillent quelques pas de danse avec leur professeur. Elles préparent une pièce de théâtre : «Al-Kanafish» : *«Un, deux, trois, répétez après moi»*... À quelques mètres de là, dans le couloir, d'autres enfants sont affairés autour de grands cartons d'un mètre sur deux. *«Je dessine avec ma copine jordanienne une île avec des palmiers et le coucher de soleil, comment tu trouves les couleurs ?»*, demande une jeune irakienne. À côté d'elle, Walid et Iman du sultanat d'Oman ont peint une fleur et des mains qui essayent de détruire cette fleur et Mariame, une jeune qatariote, insiste : *«L'enfant arabe doit avoir tous ses droits pour son éducation, sa sécurité ou les soins médicaux»*.

Un peu plus loin, dans l'atelier musical, un groupe d'enfants reprend une chanson intitulée «Tawakaf» (Arrête-toi). *«Cette chanson appelle les enfants à défendre leurs droits et à être de bons citoyens dans leurs pays»*, explique Amna Ahmad, une fille irakienne de 14 ans. Elle joue du oud depuis deux ans et a appris ses bases *(al-Maqnamat)* et les chansons arabes classiques à l'école de Bagdad. *«L'enfant arabe a besoin d'amour, d'attention et de paix*, continue-t-elle, *surtout l'enfant irakien. Au début de cette conférence, nous avons évoqué l'embargo sur l'Irak et les souffrances des enfants là-bas. Les autres enfants ont été touchés et beaucoup parmi eux ont pleuré»*.

Parabole du poussin

Dans le même groupe de musique, on trouve Sanabel, une jeune Koweïtienne de 15 ans : *«Nous avons passé de bons moments ici. Au programme, il y avait une journée dans une famille jordanienne pour connaître leurs habitudes. Et puis j'ai rencontré des enfants de toutes nationalités arabes et malgré les différences d'accent, je n'ai pas eu de problèmes. Nous partageons la même langue et la même culture»*.

Dernière station de notre petit voyage à travers les arts : le théâtre. Une trentaine d'enfants de différents pays participent à une pièce *Les Droits de l'enfant arabe* avec un professeur. Le thème y est abordé de manière très symbolique : un poussin sort de son œuf et trouve un monde de guerres, de faim et de haine. Il décide donc de revenir dans son œuf. Les enfants essaieront de lui rendre l'espoir. Ceux qui ont participé à la pièce ont beaucoup réfléchi au sens de cette parabole par rapport à leur propre expérience : *«La plupart des enfants au Bahrein exercent leurs droits sans problème*, assure Shahrazade, une adolescente du Bahrein, *mais ce qui nous gêne, c'est la situation inacceptable d'autres enfants arabes, tels que les Irakiens ou les Palestiniens»*. Amen, 14 ans, est l'un de ces Palestiniens qui a pu sortir de Jérusalem pour rejoindre Amman : *«La situation n'est pas encore stable dans les territoires occupés. Un jour, un soldat israélien m'a arrêté quand je revenais de l'école. Il m'a demandé d'ouvrir mon sac et en a vidé le contenu par terre. J'étais en colère mais je n'ai rien dit. Il avait une M16 avec lui»*.

Leïla des Émirats arabes unis est venue accompagner les quatre jeunes filles qui ont été sélectionnées pour cette réunion artistique et a constaté avec satisfaction la solidarité des enfants : *«Ils sont très proches les uns des autres et sympathisent avec les causes arabes, palestinienne ou algérienne. Ils mangent ensemble, sortent ensemble, jouent de la musique et chantent le soir à l'hôtel. Cette conférence est un moyen de montrer qu'ils sont importants, qu'ils peuvent faire quelque chose ensemble et qu'ils ne sont pas responsables des frontières et des malentendus entre leurs différents pays»*. Le rapprochement entre les troupes koweïtienne et irakienne est une bonne illustration de cette solidarité. *«Nous sommes ici pour oublier nos problèmes, nous ne sommes pas des ennemis»*, veut croire Hyfa Al-Nakas, chef du groupe koweïtien. La bonne entente générale est encore dans les paroles de la responsable égyptienne Olfate Al-Zumar : *«Nous sommes une seule famille. Les enfants ont eu des difficultés au début avec les différents accents puis ils ont abandonné rapidement leur particularité égyptienne pour mieux communiquer. Ils sont conscients de ce qui se passe et représentent notre espoir pour l'avenir, pour un monde arabe sans frontières»*. Y-a-t-il rien de plus beau qu'un rêve de gosse ? ■

Shadin Suleiman

Trésors de vie au cœur du Sahara

***Rose des sables*, un film algérien de Mohamed Rachid Benhadj (1988), en arabe sous-titré en français. En prêt au Centre culturel français.**

Une fleur dans le désert du Sahara. Fragile et vulnérable mystère de la vie. Mais Moussa, manchot de naissance, vient lui apporter de l'eau tous les jours. Moussa, c'est un peu cette fleur. Dans cette oasis perdue au milieu du désert, à 700 km d'Alger, il est choyé par sa sœur, Zineb, la seule famille qui lui reste après la guerre. Il est heureux car parfaitement intégré à la société qui l'entoure et qui fonctionne au rythme ancien de rituels séculaires. Une société peut-être plus tolérante que nos modèles modernisés et une situation que l'on souhaiterait pour tous les handicapés que nous avons tendance à rejeter la plupart du temps.

Moussa, lui, a accepté son sort et dans cet univers stérile, éprouve tous les sentiments possibles d'un être normal : l'amour pour Meryem, la douleur, le désespoir. Zineb, aussi, a accepté sa situation de vieille fille qui s'occupe de son frère et subvient à tous les besoins de cette cellule familiale réduite. Une vie réglée que vient perturber une demande en mariage inattendue. Le film expose aussi les conditions difficiles de la femme qui subit son existence, dans une société conformiste. Autour de ces deux personnages -le rôle de Moussa est interprété par Boubakeur Belaroussi de manière très réaliste-, le Sahara et ses paysages magnifiques soulignent la vie d'un autre temps des gens du désert. ■

Amineh Ishtay



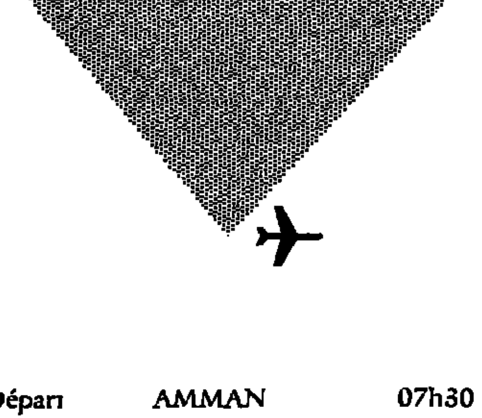
Moussa a accepté son handicap. Sa sœur

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FRANCE 98

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The Star Stadium

Edited by Abdul Hamid Adnasi



Star of the week : Zinedine Zidane

The glory belongs to 'Zizou'

By William Gildea

SAINT-DENIS, FRANCE—He's probably the most gifted midfielder in Europe, but he's been known for both good and bad performances at the hub of his Italian club, Juventus. In France, his inconsistencies have been overlooked and he's been hailed for the past three years as the new hero of French soccer. His name is Zinedine Zidane, nicknamed "Zizou."

On his best days, he has been referred to as the new Michel Platini, until now France's most famous player. But Sunday night Zidane did something Platini couldn't do—lead France to the World Cup championship. In so doing, Zidane became not only the most successful French player ever but also the most famous soccer player in the world.



Brazil was favored to win the 16th World Cup at Stade de France and the shaven-headed Ronaldo was expected to emerge in the championship game as the tournament's shining star.

Instead, it was the less-glamorous Zidane, a baldish 26-year-old son of Algerian immigrants who grew up in a poor section of Marseille known as La Castellane. Sunday night, Zidane made soccer history—for himself and for his country.

By heading home the game's first two goals, he pointed France to an unprecedented 3-0 rout of Brazil. He made it possible for a country that failed to qualify for the past two World Cups to become only the seventh nation to win a Cup. Zidane showed France the way to the most resounding defeat ever suffered by Brazil in the World Cup finals and all its World Cup qualifying matches. Zidane's epic performance ignited one of the wildest celebrations in French history.

By some accounts, not since the liberation of France from German forces in 1945, have so many red, white and blue flags streamed across the land. France not only beat the four-time World Cup winners at their game, but overwhelmed them, cause for the country-wide outbreak of nationalist fervor. Did Nostradamus, the 16th century prophet from Provence who foretold the future up to the year 3797, call this one?

Zidane, as recently as Thursday, told reporters at the French camp outside Paris that he believed it was possible to beat Brazil. "All we have to do," he said, "is score one more than Brazil and if that goal could be mine, it would be wonderful." Could he possibly have dreamed of scoring twice and winning by three? Could the Brazilians have imagined the nightmare this final would be for them?

By redirecting two corner kicks with a flick of his head, he altered the course of World Cup history. As a boy, he dreamed big dreams , but not that big. He wanted to grow up to play for Olympique Marseille. He played soccer on concrete in his impoverished neighborhood and rooted for the home club. His early accomplishments took him to Cannes for two seasons before he joined Bordeaux in 1992. That's where he blossomed. His first glory came in March 1996 in a UEFA Cup defeat from powerful AC Milan.

Bordeaux finished second in that tournament, but Zidane's fame was growing. The prestigious Juventus team in the top Italian league bought his contract, and off he went to Turin, following in Platini's footsteps. In the past two years there, Zidane came close to achieving major goals, but he still found himself on the losing side in the past two European Cup finals. "I'm aware that I still have to do more," he said before the World Cup. "Above all, I've got to score more goals and show a greater continuity. This is different. This is not a club match. We're playing for a whole country."

Zidane rarely reveals his emotions, but he did during this World Cup. Watching the Paraguay game from the bench, he looked anxious and restless—worried that France was about to lose without him. Back for the quarter-finals against Italy, which France won on penalty kicks after a scoreless tie, he appeared off his game. He appeared sullen. But he played much better against Croatia, and after the few failed scoring attempts settled into his specialty of distributing the ball. He passed 43 times in that game, reaching a teammate on 42 of them.

Zidane often speaks so softly it's hard to hear him, as it was the other day at France's training center in Clairefontaine when he said: "We have the chance to go down in history. We must grasp this chance." He answered four questions and was excused. It was more of the same

Sunday night, Zidane sped through the zone where players meet with reporters, as if rushing upfield with the ball. "My teammates asked me to score goals and I did," he said. "It's not my specialty, but I did it. It was the most important match of my life. It hasn't sunk in yet. It will dawn on me tomorrow. The only thing that I know is that the Cup will stay in France for the next four years.

We will be celebrating tomorrow, and I'll be thinking about everyone tonight." For sure, everyone will be thinking about Zidane. Because of him, all of France was united Sunday night. The world's best soccer team is now France. ■

Zidane's head gives 'Les Blues' the mondial title

PARIS—Playing with 10 men for the last 20 minutes, France won the World Cup for the first time on Sunday as two goals by Zinedine Zidane spurred it to a 3-0 victory over defending champion Brazil.

The inspirational midfielder headed in twice from first half corners to become the first player to score two goals in the final since Argentina's Mario Kempes in 1978. That final was the last time the host nation had won the tournament. Emmanuel Petit wrapped up victory in the final seconds when he struck home from inside the area.

France totally dominated the game until Marcel Desailly was sent off for his second bookable offense in the 68th minute. But France held out against a disappointing Brazil side, triggering a night of joyous celebrations across the country.

Four-time champion Brazil can have no complaints after being outplayed throughout, and France can point to half-a-dozen missed chances in the first hour.

France was rampant in the first 45 minutes and took full advantage of disruption in the Brazil camp.

Ronaldo was omitted from the original team sheet but was later included after being cleared to play only 45 minutes before kickoff. Brazil opted not to come out for a pre-match warm-up, and it looked like a poor decision as the team was second best for the entire first half.

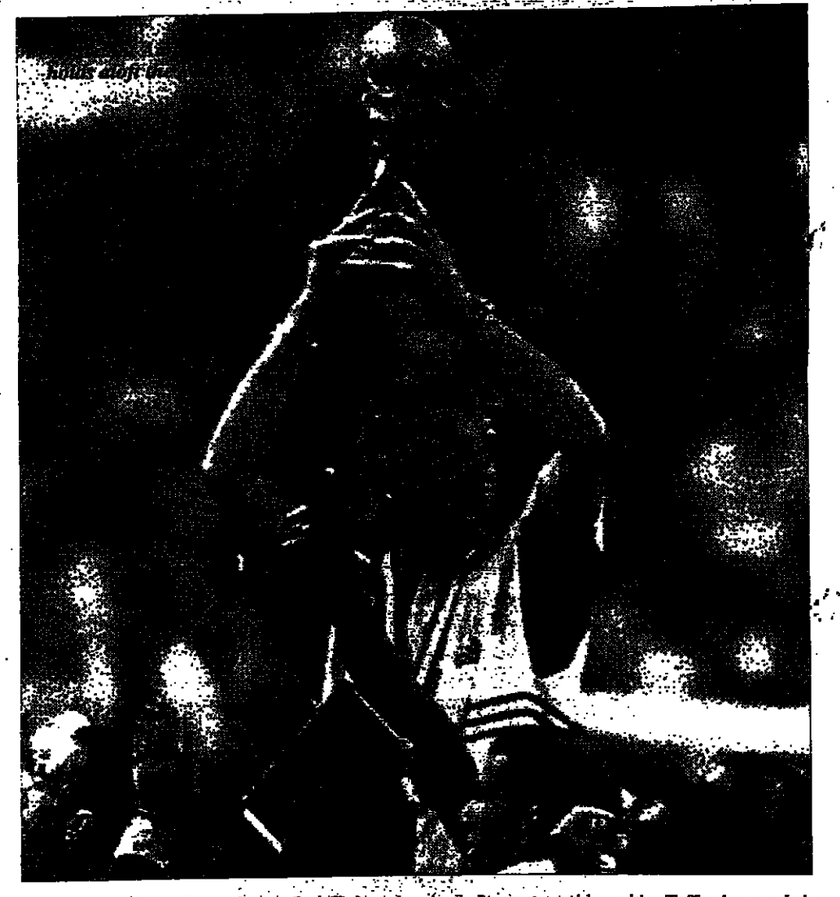
Stephane Guivarch missed two half chances in the first five minutes, while Youri Djorkaeff headed wide from close in.

It was all France, with Brazilian strikers Ronaldo and Bebeto barely touching the ball, and it was no surprise when the hosts went ahead in the 27th minute as Zidane leaped above Leonardo to head home Emmanuel Petit's corner. In a frantic end to the first half, France missed two glorious opportunities before Zidane gave it a two-goal cushion. First, a goal-bound Petit shot was deflected inches wide by Junior Baiano. Minutes later, Guivarch was clear on goal but shot weakly, allowing Taffarel to make a good save.

But in injury time, the Brazilian vulnerability in the air was shown up again as Zidane stormed in to head home a Djorkaeff corner, this time from the left. Brazil coach Mario Zagallo brought on Denilson for Leonardo at the start of the second half, and the champions did begin to look more threatening. Ronaldo had his first sight of goal in the 58th minute. But Fabien Barthez stood up well to make a good save from what was probably the Brazilians' best chance of the game before Denilson hit the bar in the final seconds.

Six minutes later, Guivarch missed another golden opportunity when he seized on a poor Cafu header but blazed over. It was his last contribution as he was replaced by Christophe Dugarry.

Desailly was dismissed after a foul on Cafu, having been booked in the first half, becoming the third player to be sent off in a World Cup final after Argentine duo Pedro Monzon and Gustvo Dezotti in 1990. Desailly's red card seemed to lift the Stade de France crowd, relatively quiet until then.



Desailly's partner, Laurent Blanc, missed the final after being sent off in the semifinal against Croatia. Dugarry should have settled it, seven minutes from time but dragged his shot wide with Taffarel stranded. Zagallo was on his feet urging the champions forward. But France defended superbly, and Petit's goal was the icing on the cake.■

Suker wins Golden Boot award

PARIS, FRANCE—Croatian striker Davor Suker became the top scorer in the World Cup finals with his sixth goal of the tournament on Saturday, and wins the Golden Boot .



Suker, who had been tied at the top of the scorer's list with five goals along with Gabriel Batistuta of Argentina and Christian Vieri of Italy, moved clear with a sweetly struck left-foot drive after 36 minutes.

His angled shot, which swerved past goalkeeper Edwin Van der Saar after going through the legs of defender Jaap Stam, proved to be the winning goal in Croatia's 2-1 victory over The Netherlands that gave his team third place in the tournament. Suker then went close to adding another goal in the second half. But he was just a fraction of a second too slow to turn Robert Prosinecki's free kick past Van der Saar. "I am the happiest man in the world tonight," Suker said. "It's great for a small country like ours to finish third in the World Cup. Its almost as good as winning it. I am very proud."

The top scorer in the World Cup finished with six goals for the sixth successive tournament. The last player to score seven in a World Cup was Grzegorz Lato of Poland in 1974.

Since then, Mario Kempes of Argentina (1978), Paolo Rossi of Italy (1982), Gary Lineker of England (1986), Salvatore Schillaci of Italy (1990) and joint-1994 top scorers Oleg Salenko (Russia) and Hristo Stoichkov (Bulgaria) have all topped the scoring chart with six.

Suker's success in this tournament is in marked contrast to the indifferent season he had with Real Madrid, which finished fourth in the Spanish League and won the European Cup against Juventus on May 20, a match in which he appeared only as an 89th minute substitute. He lost his place in the side to young Spaniard Francisco Morientes for the latter part of the season.

Suker has thrived in France, playing for every minute of all Croatia's seven matches and scoring in six of them. His first goal came in Croatia's opening 3-1 defeat of Jamaica, and he added his second in a 1-0 win over Japan. Croatia failed to score in its 1-0 loss to Argentina. But Suker was back on track in the second round against Romania, scoring the only goal of the game from a 45th minute penalty. Suker scored a memorable third to round out Croatia's 3-0 quarterfinal victory over Germany, and he also scored when his side lost 2-1 to France in last Wednesday's semifinal.■

Croatia's latest magic

Consolation win

PARIS—It's been a wonderful World Cup for Croatia, capped by Saturday night's 2-1 victory over the Netherlands for third place. Riding a brilliant counter-attack and the acrobatics of goalkeeper Drazen Ladic, the eight-year-old nation in its first world soccer championship had a memorable tournament. After upsetting the Dutch, star striker Davor Suker , the tournament's leading scorer with six goals , ran around Parc des Princes with a Croatian flag draped on his shoulders. He and his teammates, arms locked, jumped up and down on the victory stand. They earned their moment of glory as the most successful outsider at France 98, with the best finish by a newcomer since Portugal was third in 1966.

The Netherlands played its usual attacking style, only to be foiled throughout by Ladic's saves. In a span of a minute late in the game, he made spectacular saves on Patrick Kluivert and Clarence Seedorf to protect the lead.

The Frenchmen in the sellout crowd booed Slaven Bilic every time he touched the ball. The Croatian defender was pushed in the face by French defender Laurent Blanc in the semifinals and Blanc was ejected. The fans blame Bilic, who added some theatrics to the push.



Blazevic, a new graduate of world football

But Bilic played an outstanding game, who seemed to enjoy the attention. Both teams gave the fans an entertaining match. The Dutch pushed forward at every opportunity, and the Croats displayed their superb counter-attacking skills.

On both first-half goals, Croatia used quick breaks. Suker gave a perfect through pass to Robert Jarni in the 13th minute, and Jarni faked a defender before finding Robert Prosinecki. His right-footed shot from 10 yards found the net. The Netherlands tied it on a solo move by Boudewijn Zenden nine minutes later. Zenden scooted from right wing to midfield and stopped on a dime to send a left-footed bullet home off goalkeeper Ladic's hands.

Ladic made two sliding kick saves on Kluivert before Suker made it 2-1. He took a pass from playmaker Zvonimir Boban for a 20-yard shot through the legs of defender Jaap Stam and into the far corner. Totally fooled goalkeeper Edwin van der Saar sat on the grass and could only shrug as the Croats celebrated in the 36th minute.■

For the Record

THE STAR'S WORK STATION
COMPUTING & HIGH TECH
Edited by Zeid Nasser

Computer & IT companies !:

Welcome to The Star's Workstation, the absolute source on what's hot and what's not in Jordan's IT market. Fax us on 46-8296 or email us at Star@NETS.com.Jo with your news and views.

BSA study shows a continued drop in piracy levels in Arab countries, due to active law enforcement:

Pirates under seige

PIRACY LEVELS in the Arab World have fallen impressively again, as announced by the Business Software Alliance (BSA) recently.

Total piracy losses in the Middle East for 1997 reached an all time low of $92,116,000 compared to the 1996 figure of $127,669,000.

Latest figures show more than a quarter reduction in the past two years in the United Arab Emirates alone. The 28% fall over 1996 and 1997 in the UAE signifies one of the world's highest reductions, at a time when countries such as the United States, Japan and Canada are experiencing an increase in piracy.



The results of an independent study on global software piracy jointly commissioned by the BSA and the Software Publishers Association (SPA) and conducted by International Planning and Research (IPR) showed worldwide software piracy losses estimated at $11.4 billion in 1997.

The Middle East accounted for only 2% of the worldwide losses, with the UAE leading other countries in the fight against piracy.

Progress has also been made in both Saudi Arabia and Egypt, where enforcement against the use of illegal software in shops began in 1997 and the report expects that both countries will continue to step up anti-piracy actions in 1998. Kuwait recently announced a decree for the protection of Copyright Laws within Government organisations, but Oman still registers one of the world's highest rates of piracy, despite laws for the protection of computer software.

The report estimates that out of the 574 million new business software applications used globally during 1997, 228 million applications were pirated.

This represents an increase of two million pirated applications from 1996. The Middle East and Africa, at 65 per cent, has the second highest piracy rate in the world, this despite a 9 per cent drop in 1996.

Ashok Sharma, director of Middle East BSA, said: "Our goal is to have most of the Middle East countries with piracy levels below 50 per cent by the turn of the millenium. We have a lot of awareness and education to do, and we need the assistance of the regional governments, media and computer users to make this goal feasible."

Among the reasons for the enormous reduction, BSA officials cited the UAE Government's recognition of the close link between copyright protection and foreign investments, which has acted as an incentive for immediate action against copyright violations. Furthermore, authorities are keen to implement the necessary policies and procedures aided by the Ministry of Information's wide administrative power to enter, inspect, seize and fine the shops and premises suspected of the illegal copying of computer software programs.

Such administrative bodies in the UAE, like the Dubai Economic Department and Abu Dhabi Municipality, work closely with the Federal Government aiming to detect violations in the computer field.

"As a result of the recent successes in reducing piracy, local information technology has become viable and venture capital is being funneled into the information technology business. BSA has assisted in the creation of many new local IT companies and is determined to offer its considerable experience and skills towards a faster development of Arabic software in the region," said Ashok Sharma.

Describing the benefits associated with the increased international investment resulting from the control of piracy in the region, Sharma said: "As the Middle East starts diversifying into sectors other than oil, information technology will offer an attractive alternative. IT industries require comparatively lower capital investments and offer the potential to start generating profits earlier.

The IT industry is growing faster than other industries with usage well below saturation point and, due to the unique local requirements, internationally oriented software does not offer many of the features valued by the Middle East market.

"As computer sophistication is developed further, the calligraphy, speech and translation of the Arabic heritage will be profitably developed," he added.

Since 1988, Business Software Alliance has been the world's leading software developers in the international marketplace.

At the forefront of the fight to stamp out global computer software piracy, BSA educates computer users on software copyrights, advocating a public policy that expands trade opportunities and fights software piracy. Among its members are Adobe, Autodesk, Bentley Systems, Microsoft, while additional members of BSA's Policy Council are Apple Computer, Compaq, IBM and Sybase. ■

Country	Piracy Rate (1997)	Piracy Losses in US$
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

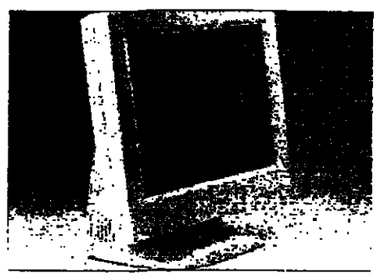
Flat panels make 'thin' progress, but look promising

FLAT PANEL screens, although having been around for several years now, still don't manage to deliver crystal clear or sharp images, as the ones provided by regular CRT monitors.

Still, flat panel technology is developing and advancements in TFT screens has meant that, viewed from the right angel, a flat panel screen could soon provide perfect image quality.

Flat panels are primarily targeted for limited space areas and tend to be viewed by the user from various angels.

For this reason, flat panel screens typically boast viewing angles of around 160 degrees. However, viewing straight-on provides the best image quality.



These screens were originally developed for a couple of reasons, like economizing on desk space, and conserving energy—environmental friendliness.

The success of flat panel screens, is definitely going to be for the good news for both the user and energy efficiency.

New models from companies like Philips, Dell, Viewsonic prove that their is a future for flat panel screens. All that is needed now, is for these screens to become cheaper.

At around $2,000 to $2,500 on the international market, it will be sometime before 'flat screens' spread out. ■

News update

MTV launches first Internet Music Channel

● Well, the first Internet Music Channel had to come from MTV; the world's best known music-channel brand.

Viacom, the parent company of MTV, announced that it would launch a continuously broadcasting TV channel on the Internet.

The Internet channel is to be taken from M2, currently viewed in some nine million homes in the United States. It will broadcast free over the Internet and is available at the following address: http://www.m2europe.com.

It will run 24 hours a day from August 3, before launching on digital television in Europe.

Windows CE on set-top boxes from Sony

● It looks like the interactive cable television wave will emerge, with Sony announcing that it expects to launch a set-top box for that purpose, which will run Windows CE therefore linking the digital worlds of computing with television.

This box will be available some time in 1999, and will be targeted at homes, where families are witnessing a convergence of digital technology TV, video viewing, computing and music.

..... and the Sony Digital Mavica

● Sony's latest digital camera comes complete with a 3.5 inch floppy disk, which makes it so much easier for users to transfer their digital photographs to screen, enabling manipulation and editing of images. It is an amazing unit, including 2.5 inch sized preview screen. The Sony Digital Mavica is battery-powered.



INTERFACE
BY ZEID NASSER

Show time?

EVERY YEAR, around this time, the Jordan Computer Society gears up for The Middle East Technology Show (METS) due to be held in November.

A lot has been said about this show in the past few years, especially with regard to whether its name should include the words 'Middle East'. Over the past four years, the show has failed to attract a true Middle East participation, as all the companies participating are based in Jordan.

Some companies could be viewed as regional or international, but they are Jordanian-owned and based in Amman. The Jordan Computer Society has worked very hard to ensure the success of METS year after year, and the show has borne fruit—commercially—but its size and reputation have remained pretty much the same, with around 35 to 40 companies every year, with little regional importance.

A while ago, it was hoped that METS would provide a gateway into the Jordanian and neighboring markets like Syria, Lebanon and maybe Iraq. The rationale behind this came from the concept of promoting Amman as a 'regional center' for information technology, serving the Levant markets.

The METS name symbolized a corporate or professional trade-show; meaning its primary aim was to attract business people and corporate clients. This has not been the case, and it is time to re-think this strategy, and apply a couple of new approaches. First, there is the option to turn METS into an even more popular event, by incorporating a stronger 'Shopping' component, meaning that larger numbers of the public will flock to the show to make use of the special deals and price cuts on offer by Jordan's computer distributors and resellers. This may require the show to be re-named and re-packaged. From observation and through basic questionnaires, it has been found that most people who come to METS are end-users (consumers), who are looking for a deal or planning to buy a piece of hardware or software. Also, a fair number of the companies at the show believe it is a 'sales event', in the sense that they can secure small and medium sized sales, with delivery promised after the show, of course. So, if it's a shopping show that people want, then maybe it's what they should get. So, a new show, only for the public, should be launched.

On the other hand, if METS is to ever evolve into a corporate trade show, like GITEX held in Dubai—the most important IT event in the Middle East—then, it would have to become a show exclusively for business people. This would mean the creation of a second show.

That way, the public get their 'shopping show', which the resellers can enjoy selling at, and the corporate companies get their 'trade-show' which can be attended by delegates from other countries interested in importing, exporting or general trade, with regard to information technology products. Maybe, a major conference can be organized alongside the trade show, to ensure that business people from neighboring countries will attend. Gradually, within a few years, we'll have our own GITEX-like event.

Although it sounds simple, implementing this approach will take a lot of professional effort from well-established exhibition organizers. So, maybe it is time that the Jordan Computer Society (JCS) approached some organizers to put together the regional trade show and conference, leaving the JCS to organize the shopping show.

Any comments? ■

Amazon.com clicking on the Internet

By David Streitfeld

SEATTLE—The first billion is always the hardest. It took Jeff Bezos four years. He made his second over the last six weeks. Even by the overheated standards of the late '90s, this is quick.

Bezos, 34, doesn't act rich. He lives with his wife in a tiny rented apartment, drives a Honda Accord, works out of a shabby office that has a view of a pawnshop and wig store. His desk is a recycled door with some legs attached.

Most of his wealth exists on paper: He owns 19.8 million shares of the online bookseller Amazon.com, which he founded in 1994 [illegible] which closed Thursday at $105.50 a share, up from $45 in early June.

Paper has been good to Bezos. He wasn't the first to see that the Internet offered a useful way to match up people and books, but he pushed the concept harder and faster. Three years after making its first sale, Amazon is the third-biggest bookseller in the country.

So far, the company has defied prognosticators who said the two biggest, Barnes & Noble and Borders, would quickly crush it. But while Amazon stockholders are making money, the company isn't. It recently had to raise funds by issuing bonds that were promptly labeled junk by Wall Street.

Nevertheless, the company has changed the landscape of book retailing. For the first time, nearly any book is only a mouse click and a few days away from any reader in the country. And that is changing the way publishers publish and readers read.

Only a few years ago, futurists were predicting that the digital age would be the death of conventional publishing. Text would be downloaded from a central source. Interactivity would give readers the power to customize their own plots. Anyone could be a publisher.

Instead, the hottest business on the burgeoning Internet is selling old-fashioned books—and not just bestsellers but poetry and weighty academic tomes and forgotten treasures of years gone by.

"Those of us who like postmodern ironic humor," says Amazon Vice President Rick Ayre, "really appreciate the fact that the most successful e-commerce is the product that this medium was supposed to eliminate."

Yet Amazon's current dominance could vanish as rapidly as it was achieved. This explains the extreme reticence of its employees to speak on virtually any aspect of the company. Ask the most basic questions—How many people work in customer service now as opposed to a year ago? What's the most popular category of books sold by Amazon?—and the answer almost invariably is, "Jeff wouldn't like me to tell you that."

Bezos doesn't want to provide any assistance to Barnes & Noble, whose online division got a late start. "To be nine times bigger than your nearest competitor," he says, "you actually only have to be 10 percent better."

This won't be easy. Perhaps this is why Bezos acts as if his billions don't exist. If he's not smart, they won't.

A Foot in the Door. One reason for Amazon's success is its willingness to advertise. At one point, the company was spending an incredible $36 in marketing for every $100 in sales. Since Amazon is merely a middleman in the book business—it uses the same supply pipeline as ordinary bookstores—establishing a name for itself was crucial. It worked. Amazon, which will sell about $400 million worth of books, music and videos this year, is on the verge of becoming as recognizable as Starbucks—the last great retailer to come out of this city and invade the country's consciousness.

"Amazon brilliantly, and at great expense, has branded," says book publisher Peter Osnos. "When people think of ordering a book online, they think of Amazon. It's like Xerox. It's entered the language."

The central concept of online bookselling is breathtakingly simple: Instead of people going in search of books, make it so the books can come to them. But it's safe to say that no one in the book world anticipated such a possibility, or they would have tried to create something like Amazon themselves.

"I didn't think of it," says John Ingram, chairman of Ingram Book Co., the wholesaler that ships Amazon the majority of its titles. "Before 1995, I'm not sure I knew what the Internet was."

A Start on Wall Street. It took Bezos, a summa cum laude Princeton graduate whose previous job was running a Wall Street hedge fund, to see the potential. Already it's entered business mythology—how Bezos noticed in 1994 that this newfangled thing called the World Wide Web was growing 2,300 percent a year. He wanted in by the smartest available route. Methodically, he drew up a list of products that could be sold on the Internet, including computers, software, music, videos, clothing.

He chose books because of the variety of product (more than a million titles in print), because no one merchandiser dominated the market (Barnes & Noble, the largest, had only about a 12 percent share) and because computers could be very useful in helping customers in ill-defined searches for hazily remembered volumes.

That decided, Bezos quit his job so fast he couldn't even tell the moving van exactly where he was going. He just headed west, thinking about the best place to base his new venture.

California was out because it had too many people—all of whom would have to pay sales tax if they bought any books from an in-state company. Colorado was a possibility, but Bezos finally picked Seattle for its high-tech environment as well as access to an Ingram warehouse. Everything was very carefully thought out. Futurist Paul Saffo describes Bezos as "systematic. There's no mist in his eyes. He's not all gooey about books as they used to be."

Ye Olde Cyberstore. In a business using the most sophisticated technology, Bezos's whole purpose is to retrieve something that thrived in the past.

"I want to transport online bookselling," he says, "back to the days of the small bookseller, who got to know you very well and would say things like, 'I know you like John Irving, and guess what, here's this new author, I think he's a lot like John Irving.'" Once the customer has made his choice, a premium is put on speed. Most books arrive at the front door only a few days after the order is sent-so quickly, so painlessly that the buyer is supposed to lose interest in going to the library or superstore. "I abide by the theory that says in the late 20th century, the scarcest resource is time," Bezos says. "If you can save people money and time, they'll like that."

No wonder today's dwindling numbers of small booksellers feel threatened. At their convention in Chicago at the end of May, there was urgent talk and real fear about the peril presented by Amazon.

"Amazon has hit us harder than the superstores did," says Carla Cohen of Politics & Prose, the leading Washington independent. "It can advertise and discount and lose money at the same time. In the real world, most of us would be out of business if we did that." ■

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'Lethal Weapon IV'

Ready, aim, zzzzzzz

By Stephen Hunter

AMONG THE SIG-Sauers and AK-47s and Colts and Berettas and Smith & Wessons that decorate Lethal Weapon IV, the most lethal weapon of all turns out to be the script.

This curious document must have been written on one side of a postcard using a very fat red crayon. That's about the amount of story the movie contains, and I know it was a fat crayon because there are four people listed in the writing and story credits and it must have taken all of them to maneuver it through those complicated zig-zaggy letters like 'w' and 'x.'

The rest is gratuitous violence and stunts, some quite spectacular, all resolutely meaningless. There's also a little comic banter and a lot of redundancy. Did we really need both Chris Rock and Joe Pesci? I mean, isn't one funnyman enough, especially with the bickering Bickersons of Law Enforcement, Mel Gibson and Danny Glover, hogging the camera in endless yammering love spats? And how many car chases can one movie hold?

All the regulars are here. The movie really should have been called 'Lethal Weapon: The Reunion.' Besides Pesci, Rene Russo reprises from III. Gibson's Beretta and Glover's Smith are of course on hand, or should I say, in hand.

Does anybody remember the first film? That was an actual movie, until it went nuts at the end, and the lethal weapon of the title was Gibson's melancholy mind. He was a devastated, self-loathing Vietnam vet hellbent on spectacular self-extinction; memories of America's least favorite war filled the film, giving it an almost tragic dignity. Its arc was redemptive. It watched as the crippled loner white man was healed by the healthy black family man. It was as full of love as it was of guns, and it was very full of guns.

Four profitable editions down the line, that's all gone, to be replaced by nothing. The movie has no subtext at all, unless it's something like 'orange propane explosions are really cool!' Maybe they are, but every 3 minutes and 21 seconds?

When the movie finally gets started, about an hour or so in, it seems to be about a scam by which the Chinese triads are buying the freedom of imprisoned elders from corrupt Chinese generals with counterfeit yen. Why, you ask, as nobody connected with the production ever did, would such a thing take place on American soil, not Chinese? Possibly the movie explains it, possibly it doesn't; who could tell? The real reason, however, is that if it took place in China there'd be no excuse for Gibson and Glover to launch a car from the Ventura Freeway, plunge it through a drafting office full of blueprints, people and desks, re-launch it on the other side, and have it land on the Santa Monica Freeway. Is this worth seeing? If you like breakage, the answer is a big yes.

Glover's Murtaugh and Gibson's Riggs literally get in the way of the Chinese caper when their fishing boat is sunk by a tramp freighter smuggling in illegals in a gambit so tertiary to the central plot that it's hardly there at all. Riggs sinks the freighter with his pistol while Murtaugh shanghais the members of one alien family and grants them his own private asylum, because he's moved by the 'slavery' aspects of their plights (the illegals are indentured to Chinese gangsters for $35,000 worth of hard labor). Eventually the immigrant family is re-acquired by the triad boys to use as leverage to get an engraver to complete the counterfeit job.



Mel Gibson in one of his earlier films

Everything else is riffs and racism. The director, Richard Donner, was so proud of his anti-apartheid stand that he did a whole movie about it (Lethal Weapon II), and he festoons this picture with anti-NRA and anti-assault rifle messages (even though he's probably sold more Berettas to the American public than Beretta's actual ad agency). But he seems to regard Asians as amusing li'l Oriental fellers, with buck teeth and funny accents. He even uses the old 'flied lice' gag! Some liberal!

The movie's one grace note is sounded by its villain, played by the Hong Kong action star Jet Li. This guy has martial arts moves that are so dynamic one can hardly believe them, some twisty scissors kick action that makes him seem like he's from another dimension, or at least another form of gravity. When he lets loose, the movie becomes, however so briefly, fascinating, even awesome. It's the power, instantly recognizable, of the authentic over the artificial.

As for Gibson and Glover, both remain likable but nothing they do could be confused with acting. Alice and Ralph Kramden sniped at each other more funnily 40 years ago than these two old wheezers.

Lethal Weapon IV is also endless. You know the thing where you think it's over and you start to get up, and suddenly a whole new scene begins and your heart sinks? It does this twice. Twice! This is some kind of weirdness: A movie that almost forgets to start almost forgets to end.■

LA Times-washington Post News Service

Travel

Romancing cosmopolitan Capri

By Christopher Reynolds

CAPRI, Italy—The world comes to Capri. For instance, on one brilliant morning recently, about three dozen American and German tourists were gathered at the Gardens of Augustus, a cliff-top park on the south coast of the island, where lush flowers give way to ancient stonework, which gives way to sheer cliffs, which give way to a sea that may be azure or cobalt, or both, depending on the sunlight and the hour.

Some of the Americans pointed at the Mediterranean below, where bright-hued boats bobbed at the docks at Marina Piccola. Other tourists settled onto benches by the garden fountain, or squinted up at the old fortress on the neighboring mountaintop, once a rampart against medieval pirates. The Germans and Americans glanced up to the Villa Krupp, now a hotel but 90 years ago where the expatriate Russian Maxim Gorki briefly lived and entertained a house guest named Lenin. Or they gazed upon the twisting stony footpath that the German steel magnate Friedrich Alfred Krupp commissioned in 1900 to connect the marina below with the villas above. Still others among the visitors were looking east to the dramatic rock formations—the Faraglioni—that jut from the sea off the bluffs of Punta di Tragara. As surely as the ferries and hydrofoils will come from Naples and Sorrento, the world wants to visit Capri, and for this the world cannot be faulted.

Even with all the summertime traffic the island gets—about 2.1 million day-trippers last year, and about 100,000 overnight guests, all crawling over a patch of land about four miles long and two miles wide—it's hard to imagine a more sure-fire destination for a honeymoon or any romantic escape. There are spectacular footpaths, scores of restaurants and dozens of hotels, from the intimate to the palatial. Blood-red, fresh-squeezed orange juice. Deep blue sea caves. Rampant flowers. Pasta with seafood prepared by adept hands. Lemon liqueur from the island's own orchards. And a collection of villas, public and private, ruined and restored, that stand as impressive measure of just how well a human being can live with enough money and the right real estate.

In fact, the island's history of wealth writ large begins about 2,000 years ago with the Roman emperors Augustus and his successor Tiberius, who had the Villa Jovis built here. Tiberius lived in the villa for the last decade of his life and, the story goes, occasionally had those who displeased him thrown off the back yard cliff, nearly 1,000 feet above the sea.

Now Tiberius' turf seems besieged every sunny weekend day. Nevertheless, in just about every direction, the island is spellbinding. Blame this on either its natural wonders—picture Big Sur with more sun and 360 degrees of ocean—or the venerable human constructions on, in and under those wonders. You pause at a particularly striking bluff-top viewpoint, and discover, incidentally, that someone has chiseled into the wall a poem about the island by Pablo Neruda: "Reina de roca/ en tu vestido/ de color amaranto y azzurra ..." (Queen of the rock/ in your dress/ the color of amaranth and azzuro). Inevitably, a later pair of lovers have just below declared their togetherness per sempre ("forever"), but still, if ever a lily were successfully gilded, Capri is it.

The trick is appreciating it when it's not enveloped in buzzing bees—that is, other people. The crowds in Capri and Anacapri, the island's secondary town, are often alarmingly thick at midday in July and August, and there are more than a few T-shirt vendors and souvenir shops alongside the designer shops in Capri town (and an even larger number flanking the pedestrian areas of Anacapri). Since Capri is just a 40-minute hydrofoil ride from Naples in good weather—and 20 minutes from Sorrento—it's easy for big tour groups to wedge a few island hours into a go-go-go itinerary.



The entrance to the cave at the Blue Grotto. Photo by Christopher Reynolds.

It's also true that in many ways Capri doesn't seem to belong to Italy as much as it belongs to a certain stripe of international artist and aristocrat: the German industrialist who built the footpath; the Chilean poet who sang the island's praises; the Russian thinkers who repaired here to escape the czars' regime; the pair of German visitors who rediscovered and popularized the Blue Grotto in 1826; the Swedish doctor and writer, Axel Munthe, who built the immaculate Villa San Michele on its incomparable aerie at Anacapri. Certainly, the marbled and columned lobby of the 150-room Grand Hotel Quisisana has harbored many a global public figure (short list: Claudette Colbert, Tom Cruise, Gerald Ford, Ernest Hemingway, Jean-Paul Sartre and Sting) and, with rates reaching well beyond $250 nightly and a bit of cool attitude, intimidated many a traveler.

What can it cost to sleep on such an island? If you're willing to come in April, May, September or October and do without a swimming pool, you can sleep in atmospheric little hotels such as the five-room Pensione Belsito or the 12-room Hotel Villa Krupp for less than $125 nightly, breakfast and taxes included. From June through August, the numbers at those places are closer to $135 to $170 a night. At the high-style hotels such as the Quisisana or the Scalinatella, both with sea-view balconies, pools and immaculate public rooms, tariffs routinely run $300 to $400 in peak season.

I stayed at the Quisisana at reduced off-season rates, but still felt guilty about not exploiting the sprawling facilities—spa, reading room and so on—for which I was paying so much. Next time, I'd take the unpretentious old Belsito or Villa Krupp, or maybe splurge with the Hotel Luna, one of the best-sited hotels you can find anywhere, with spacious gardens and rates that often fall under $200 nightly.

Duck out of the sun in Anacapri and inspect the remarkable 18th century majolica tile mosaic illustrations of Adam and Eve in Paradise that cover the entire floor of the Church of San Michele (entrance about $1). Or really challenge yourself and tackle the 800-odd steps of the Scala Fenicia (Phoenician Stairs), cut into cliff rock, that run down the hill from Anacapri to water's edge at Marina Grande.

For a top-notch dinner, make reservations at La Campannina in Capri town, where service is gracious and multilingual, and the ravioli Caprese will command your full attention. And after you've finished, you can stroll to the handiest viewpoint, cast aside all thought of fellow tourists, appraise the winking lights of Naples on the horizon, try to catch the moon's reflection in the Mediterranean, and hope the ghost of Tiberius doesn't sneak up behind you.■

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Watching the world go by from a cafe on Capri's "piazzetta," the village square. Photo by Christopher Reynolds.

